

PARTISAN REVIEW

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PROBLEMS AND PERSPECTIVES IN REVOLUTIONARY LITERATURE

Editorial

THE LAST YEAR has seen a quickening in the growth of revolutionary literature in America. The maturing of labor struggles and the steady increase of Communist influence have given the impetus and created a receptive atmosphere for this literature. As was to be expected, the novel—which is the major literary form of today—has taken the lead. Cantwell, Rollins, Conroy and Armstrong have steered fiction into proletarian patterns of struggle. In the theatre, *Peace on Earth*, *Stevedore* and *They Shall Not Die* show a parallel growth. The emergence of a number of little revolutionary magazines, together with the phenomenal success of the weekly *New Masses*, has provided an outlet for the briefer forms of writing. *The Great Tradition*, by Granville Hicks, has launched us on a revaluation of American literary history.

This new literature is unified not only by its themes but also by its perspectives. Even a casual reading of it will impress one with the conviction that here is a new way of looking at life—the bone and flesh of a revolutionary sensibility taking on literary form. The proletarian writer, in sharing the moods and expectations of his audience, gains that creative confidence and harmonious functioning within his class which gives him a sense of responsibility and discipline totally unknown in the preceding decade. Lacking this solidarity with his readers, the writer, as has been the case with the esthetes of the twenties and those who desperately carry on their traditions today, ultimately becomes skeptical of the meaning of literature as a whole, sinking into the Nirvana of peaceful cohabitation with the Universe. Indeed, it is largely this intimate relationship between reader and writer that gives revolutionary literature an activism and purposefulness long since unattainable by the writers of other classes.

Conflicting Currents in Revolutionary Literature

However, despite the unity of outlook of revolutionary literature, it contains a number of trends embodying contradictory aims and assumptions. It would be strange indeed, if the class struggle did not operate *within* revolutionary literature, though it is most clearly defined in the

fight against bourgeois literature. The varying backgrounds of revolutionary writers and the diverse ways through which they come to Marxism set the frame for this inner struggle. Moreover, since forms and methods of writing do not drop like the gentle rain of heaven, but are slowly evolved in creative practice conditioned by the developing social relations, it is only natural that sharp differences of opinion should arise. To a Marxist such differences are not personal and formal, but actually reflect the stress of class conflict. Thus, the development of revolutionary literature is not unilinear; its progress is a process unfolding through a series of contradictions, through the struggle of opposed tendencies, and it is the business of criticism* to help writers resolve these contradictions. Unless criticism fulfils this task, the progress of revolutionary literature is retarded and certain writers may even be shunted off their revolutionary rails.

Thus far Marxian criticism in this country has not faced the problem squarely, nor has it stated the diverse tendencies. The illusion has been allowed to spread that revolutionary writers constitute one happy family, united in irreconcilable struggle against capitalism. To a considerable extent, therefore, an atmosphere of empiricism has resulted, where writers clutch at the nearest method at hand without conscious selection, unfortified by criticism with the Marxian equipment necessary for coping with the problems of creative method. Some incidental pieces of criticism have helped to guide writers and readers, but on the whole no attempt has been made to place such theoretical work in the center of our discussions.

Neither have critics given writers adequate guidance in their quest of realistic revolutionary themes. Many young writers have declared themselves for Communism, and have joined the John Reed Clubs, but with few exceptions, they have not shown as yet a sufficient understanding of the meaning of such declarations in practice. What does the present paucity of authentic revolutionary short stories prove? Most of our writers have not grasped the fact that workers' struggles cannot be written about on the basis of inventiveness or a tourist's visit. The profile of the Bolshevik is emerging in America, heroic class battles are developing, new human types and relations are budding in and around the Communist Party; obviously, therefore, revolutionary fiction cannot be produced by applying abstract Communist ideology to old familiar surroundings.

* By 'criticism' we do not mean the body of formal analysis alone. Throughout this editorial most of our references to 'critics' and 'criticism' are meant to include the whole organizational and editorial leadership of revolutionary literature, the writer's critical attitude to himself and to others, as well as formal analysis.

The assimilation of this new material requires direct participation instead of external observation; and the critic's task is to point out the dangers inherent in the *spectator's* attitude. The critic is the ideologist of the literary movement, and any ideologist, as Lenin pointed out "is worthy of that name only when he marches ahead of the spontaneous movement, points out the real road, and when he is able, ahead of all others, to solve all the theoretical, political and tactical questions which the 'material elements' of the movement spontaneously encounter. It is necessary to be critical of it [the movement], to point out its dangers and defects and to aspire to *elevate* spontaneity to consciousness." (*A Conversation With Defenders of Economism*).

Pulling in Opposite Directions

The most striking tendency, and the most natural one in a young revolutionary literature, is what is commonly called "leftism." Though it has seldom been explicitly stated in literary theory, its prejudices and assumptions are so widespread that at this time its salient features are easily recognized. Its zeal to steep literature overnight in the political program of Communism results in the attempt to force the reader's responses through a barrage of sloganized and inorganic writing. "Leftism," by tacking on political perspectives to awkward literary forms, drains literature of its more specific qualities. Unacquainted with the real experiences of workers, "leftism," in criticism and creation alike, hides behind a smoke-screen of verbal revolutionism. It assumes a direct line between economic base and ideology, and in this way distorts and vulgarizes the complexity of human nature, the motives of action and their expression in thought and feeling. In theory the "leftist" subscribes to the Marxian thesis of the continuity of culture, but in practice he makes a mockery of it by combating all endeavors to use the heritage of the past. In criticism the "leftist" substitutes gush on the one hand, and invective on the other, for analysis; and it is not difficult to see that to some of these critics Marxism is not a science but a *sentiment*. Some of the poetry of Maxwell Bodenheim and H. H. Lewis, George Marlen's novel *The Road*, and the short stories that Joseph Vogel has published of late are examples of this tendency. In fact its influence has been so pervasive that even some of our more important works have suffered from elements of "leftism." (It is obviously beyond the scope of this editorial to analyze the subtle way in which "leftism" has affected various revolutionary works.) E. A. Schachner has written a long article on *Revolutionary Literature in the United States Today* (*The Windsor Quarterly*, Spring 1934) that

is a critical complement to "leftism" in poetry and fiction. Schachner fails to see literature as a process, so much so that he absurdly identifies the "coming of age" of American literature with the unemployed demonstration of March 6, 1930. Though he shuttles from a purely literary to a purely political point of view, never integrating the two, his emphasis throughout is schematically political.

"Leftism" is not an accidental practice, nor can it be regarded merely as youthful impetuosity. Its literary "line" stems from the understanding of Marxism as mechanical materialism. In philosophy, mechanical materialism assumes a direct determinism of the whole superstructure by the economic foundation, ignoring the dialectical interaction between consciousness and environment, and the reciprocal influence of the parts of the superstructure on each other and on the economic determinants. The literary counterpart of mechanical materialism faithfully reflects this vulgarization of Marxism. But its effects strike even deeper: it paralyzes the writer's capacities by creating a dualism between his artistic consciousness and his beliefs, thus making it impossible for him to achieve anything beyond fragmentary, marginal expression.

At the other extreme we find a right-wing tendency, which is equally unsuccessful in imaginatively recreating the proletarian movement. The right-wing writer is usually very productive, but his work differs but slightly from that of liberal bourgeois writers. His acceptance of the revolutionary philosophy is half-hearted, though he makes sporadic use of it. The source of his attitude and practice is political fence-straddling, disinterest in Marxism, and lack of faith in the proletariat.

In fiction the novels of Dos Passos are a prototype of this viewpoint. Several of our younger poets have adopted the obscurantism of the verse in the bourgeois-esthetic little magazines. Horace Gregory's criticism, not to mention his attempts at revolutionary poetry, clearly exemplifies this semi-revolutionary approach, which really amounts to little more than liberalism. He is very open-minded to revolutionary ideas, but that alone does not constitute a Marxian orientation.

We realize, of course, that on their way to the revolution many fellow-travelers must inevitably tread this path. Nor would it be correct for Marxists to taunt and bludgeon them when their pace is slow. But passivity is equally incorrect. It must always be remembered that the fellow-travelers are trailing, not leading the literary movement, and our critics must not only make this clear but must give them concrete direction in order to help them overcome their backward views as quickly as possible. No doubt many fellow-travelers resent criticism, especially

Marxian criticism, and some of our revolutionary editors and critics, unfortunately, in their endeavor to strike the proper note in their relations with fellow-travelers, frequently seem unable to distinguish between diplomacy and analysis, or between those who lead and those who trail behind—not that diplomacy has no place in literary criticism, but, generally speaking, *it should be put in its place.*

It should not be assumed that by elimination those writers who do not swing in either of these two directions have solved the problems of revolutionary writing. There is a large and diverse group who plunge into *easy* forms, drifting on the current of chance, without any sharp consciousness of their problems. The implication of their practice is that for the purposes of revolutionary literature, one form is as good as another, and that in general the old forms can be taken over bodily. For all practical purposes, they, as well as the other groups, have shown little audacity in reaching out for the vast raw material of art that the proletarian struggle is constantly erupting.

Problems and Pioneers

In this editorial, some of our problems have been implicitly touched upon. In the main they consist of: 1) The degree of the writer's awareness of *strata* in his audience, 2) The method of imaginatively assimilating political content, 3) The differentiation between class-alien and usable elements in the literature of the past, and 4) the development of Marxist standards in literature.

Not a few proletarian writers have grappled with these problems. In his recent series of articles on *Revolution and the Novel in the New Masses*, Granville Hicks has probed these problems in fiction. However, though Hicks has helped to clarify our approach, his method of classifying unimportant details, as well as his choice of critical subjects, is removed from the way the writer faces these problems. The writer does not decide *a priori* whether he will write a dramatic or complex novel; his choice is determined by a number of psychological and thematic factors. In general Hicks has given us a class analysis of the more obvious elements in fiction without first establishing essential Marxian generalizations about the relation of method to theme and form in terms of expanding audiences and new standards.

Obed Brooks is another critic who has concerned himself with some aspects of these problems. Michael Gold and Joseph Freeman are the earliest pioneers of Marxian criticism in America, and their work has been mostly in the nature of direct *general* class warfare against bourgeois

literary ideology. They fought valiantly to win a place for proletarian writers in American literature. Joshua Kunitz brought to America some of the experiences of Soviet writers. Some of our poets have been searching for poetic forms and themes that adequately express the emotional equivalents of the social-economic scene. But only in the novel, the most successful genre of our literature, have any far-reaching attempts been made toward the solution of these problems.

Looking Ahead

These problems cannot be solved by decree or dogma. Solutions will be made step by step, in the course of the continuous interaction of literary theory and literary practice. In this editorial, however, we wish to indicate several means of approach.

The very existence of two main types of revolutionary writing, the more intellectual and the more popular, shows that there is a division in our audience in terms of background and class composition. Workers who have had no literary education prefer the poetry of Don West to that of S. Funaroff, whereas intellectuals reverse this choice. The proletarian writer should realize that he is functioning through his medium within the vanguard of the movement as a whole. As such, his task is to work out a sensibility and a set of symbols *unifying* the responses and experiences of his total audience. Insofar as this cannot be done overnight, his innovations must be constantly checked by the responses of his main audience, the working class, even while he strives to raise the cultural level of the masses.

The question of creative method is primarily a question of the imaginative assimilation of political content. We believe that the sensibility is the medium of assimilation; political content should not be isolated from the rest of experience but must be merged into the creation of complete personalities and the perception of human relations in their physical and sensual immediacy. The class struggle must serve as a premise, not as a discovery. This the "leftist" does not do on the grounds that such a method dilutes the political directness that he aims at; actually, however, he defeats his purpose, inasmuch as he dissolves action and being in political abstractions. To a Marxist the bourgeois claims of universality are an empty concept; those elements in art that have been called universal are merely those that have recurred so far. The problem of the revolutionist is not to seek universals but usables, for his task is to create a synthesis and not merely an innovation. Ultimately, of course, the question of usables involves, first, the retaining of the cultural acquisitions of humanity

as a *background of values*, and secondly, a selection of specific contributions by individual bourgeois writers.

Unless we are acutely aware of the body of literature as a whole, no standards of merit are possible. The measure of a revolutionary writer's success lies not only in his sensitiveness to proletarian material, but also in his ability to create new landmarks in the perception of reality; that is, his success cannot be gauged by immediate agitational significance, but by his recreation of social forces in their entirety. This becomes specific literary criticism when applied to choice of theme, character and incident. And here it is necessary to stress what many writers tend to forget: literature is a medium steeped in sensory experience, and does not lend itself to the conceptual forms that the social-political content of the class struggle takes most easily. Hence the translation of this content into images of *physical life* determines—in the esthetic sense—the extent of the writer's achievement.

The Role of Partisan Review

A magazine is a form of criticism. By its selection of manuscripts, by its emphases in criticism, and by the tone that it adopts, its position is defined. *Partisan Review*, as the organ of the John Reed Club of New York, has approached revolutionary writing in the light of the tasks and problems discussed in this editorial. Our emphasis has been on creative experimentation and critical precision, leaving more immediate political questions to other periodicals in the field, especially the *New Masses*. The present abundance of revolutionary publications makes such a division of labor possible and desirable.

The editors of *Partisan Review* feel, however, that they have not yet succeeded in the tasks they have set for themselves. On the whole much of the published material has not measured up to our standards. We have not published as many experimental stories and poems as we would desire, and neither has most of the criticism dealt with fundamental questions. This is largely due to the fact that the majority of the manuscripts received show the influence of precisely those tendencies that *Partisan Review* is setting out to combat. At least seventy-five percent of the stories and poems submitted, as well as those solicited, are "leftist" in conception and in execution. On the other hand, even some of the things we have published, follow traditional patterns too closely, failing to give an insight into the social scene. We believe that only in exposing these weaknesses and in fighting their causes will it be possible for *Partisan Review* to achieve its aims.

Partisan Review, of course, cannot presume to solve these questions single-handed. Together with the *New Masses*, which is the central organ of the cultural movement, and with the numerous regional magazines, we hope to develop a critical atmosphere that will strengthen the most vital forces in our young literary tradition.

This is a perspective which can be realized only when the readers and the writers work with the editors toward this common aim. We invite all revolutionary writers and fellow-travelers, and especially the writers in the John Reed Clubs throughout the country, to contribute to the magazine; and we welcome readers and writers alike to use our columns for stating their reactions to our policy and to the contents of each issue. Only in the course of such collective discussion and reciprocal influence can a revolutionary literature reach maturity.

WALLACE PHELPS and PHILIP RAHV

SOUTHERN HIGHWAY 51

John Wexley

IT WAS VERY COLD FOR TENNESSEE. And it was colder for the boy called Texas Kid. He sat on the running board of the small car, rubbing his hands desperately, and pounding his feet on the cement highway. Sandy-haired Jack Kearns sat at his side, rolling a cigarette. Kearns had picked him up near Evansville the day before, but since then had never thought of offering the Kid his 'makins'. And Tex wouldn't ask him. Hell, no.

They had been waiting there since seven in the morning, after they had left Fairchild. In that town, they had spent the night in the town constabulary. The constable had given them coffee, too. And this waiting on State Highway 51, was one of Sandy's tricks. He had come all the way from Pittsburgh with this particular one, and he said he was bound for Birmingham. Sandy called himself a roller. He explained that he rolled steel into sheet-iron, like they use on roofs and garages. Now the men were all being laid off in Pittsburgh, and anyway, Alabama was his home-state. He had kin there.

This trick of Sandy's, consisted in stopping passing cars and borrowing a gallon of gas. This he would do until he had collected a full tank. Then he could drive straight for a hundred miles or more. Sometimes a motorist would complain he had no way of getting the gas out of the tank, but Sandy always had a ready answer. He had the funnel, the wrench and the can all prepared. The owner would mumble a reluctant Okay, and turn off his motor and light his pipe or cigar. Sandy would then open the plug in the tank and allow to run into his can all he could get away with. If the owner wasn't lazy and stood by, Sandy would pretend to be clumsy and would find it hard to get the plug back in place.

Now here they were, an hour and more, and two cars had passed them by, the one without even stopping, and the other claiming he knew the racket. Finally the Texas Kid could no longer bear the cold and suggested that the motor might freeze, if they didn't get going to Knoxville. Sandy took the suggestion, and both got into the car.

Sandy stepped on the starter and the motor turned over lazily. He

reached down for the 'choke' and his heavy brown shoe pressed on the starter again. It seemed to Texas that the engine was sleepy and didn't want to get up. All it would consent to do, was to turn over a bit, and grumble.

"I reckon it's done gone and froze, Sandy." The heavy shoe pressed down again.

"Down in our Panhandle, we allus say the North Pole blows down from over Kansas, but I never done seen no frost like this one heah." The Kid's teeth chattered so wildly, he had to stop talking. Jack Kearns then reached behind them, into the compartment, and drew out a rusty crank.

"Try a few turns with the crank, Tex. I don't like tuh be killin' the battery."

The Kid was of smaller build than Sandy, but wiry and tough enough. Yet cranking this frozen motor was for him an extreme effort. Perhaps it was, because he was frozen himself, and hungry too. Anyway, the crank required three or more severe jerks to get it around once. He continued to struggle with it, bravely until Sandy clambered out of the car.

"Never you min'. I'll do it. You jest keep yo' foot on the gas, ready"

Tex was nineteen the last December, and his birthday was spent repairing California Highway 73, for the Needles County Prison Commission. Well, it was damn cold, but it was better than that fierce desert sun beating down on his back, on the road between Needles and La Joya, Arizona. Sandy turned the crank steadily. He seemed strong enough to turn it forever, for many hours anyway. His shoulders were as wide as the radiator in front. Tex remembered his utter amazement of the day before. The rear tire had sprung a slow leak and had gone flat. Sandy had given him the 'jack' to hold. It was raised and Tex started to lower it, in order to get it under the axle.

"Never min' with that. Jest slip it under as I tell you." Then Tex's eyes almost popped out of his head, as he watched his companion brace back and shoulders against the rear of the car, and grasp the bumper with his both hands and straighten out. And as he straightened, the rear end of the car rose with him, until it was off the ground. Then Sandy gave him the signal to slip the 'jack' in place. Later, the steel-roller boomed a laugh of satisfaction as the Kid spoke of his astonishment.

"I once did it with a Buick six. This one's pie."

Now Texas with his foot ready on the throttle, and his hand on the 'choke', watched the other's brow bead with sweat. Tex found it interest-

ing to count the turns of the crank. After some time he counted forty turns. Finally Sandy did get tired. He stood up and swore.

"The goddam bitch's froze stiff. We shouldn't have stayed heah so long."

"D'juh think she'll start?"

"Sho', sho'. She'll start when she's goddam good an' ready. Jest like any woman. They give in only when they're warmed up. An' all yuh gotta do, is warm 'em up. . . ." He paused and turned. Tex turned to follow his glance. Coming down the road, heading in their direction, they saw a husky Negro, all bundled up in a tattered mackinaw. They waited. He stopped at the side of the car and nodded affably.

"Good-mawnin'." Sandy looked him over carefully, then jerked his head toward the car, and held up the crank at the same time.

"Try turnin' her over a bit? Huh?" The Negro looked at the crank, at Texas, then at Sandy. To Tex, he seemed almost grotesque, as he stood there with his long legs, and his bundled top-heavy torso.

"Sho' nuff. I'll take a try at her." Sandy tendered him the crank and remained at his side. Tex made himself ready with the throttle and 'choke' and looked through the cloudy windshield. The Negro's teeth flashed.

"Ready, please suh?"

Tex nodded. He saw the black bob up and down in front of the radiator, turning the crank rapidly. He counted thirty-five turns. The Negro stopped, straightened up and breathed hard. He smiled broadly.

"Kinda froze, huh?" Sandy was rolling another cigarette and grunted. "Yeah."

The black man's eyes moved slowly from Sandy to the Texas Kid and back again. Jack Kearns stood motionless, expressionless, manipulating with heavy fingers, the cigarette paper and 'makins'. The two men, black and white, looked at each other for a full second. Tex glanced from one to the other, curious. The Negro spat on his hands, and took hold of the rusty crank.

The Kid counted twenty-three. The black fellow was sweating now, and glistening drops of water rolled off his black skin. Then he suddenly stopped and straightened, and addressed no one, particularly.

"I reckon she jest won't start up."

Sandy grunted. "She'll start."

The Negro did not look at him, but kept staring at the crank.

"S-ho' nuff, but I figger I'll have tuh be movin' away. I'm tuh be in Knoxville at nine." He pushed his hands into ragged pockets and looked

over at Tex. The boy sat, expressionless and silent. Sandy puffed at his cigarette.

"Ain't yuh gonna start it fo' us?" The Negro's eyes wavered.

"I would, suh. But I jest cain't do it now. It's all of six miles from heah, and it's eight o'clock now, or theah' bouts, an' . . ."

Sandy spoke without moving his lips at all.

"Git down an' crank that car." The Negro looked up, startled. He stared down at the crank, then looked up at Tex.

"I'm gonna be late and git bawled out, please suh." The Negro ventured. Sandy remained silent. The Negro looked at Tex and grinned in a peculiar fashion. Then he bent over the crank once more. The Kid's lips moved in count, mechanically. After twenty turns, the black worker stopped to unbutton his coat. Then Tex counted twenty more. Suddenly the buck stopped and gasped breathlessly,

"It's warmin' up now, but I'm jest knocked out." Sandy waited, and watched him. He stood, leaning on the radiator, his chest rising and falling in painful rhythm. Then Sandy snapped,

"Git on that crank, yuh black bastard, befo' I knock yo' teeth down yo' throat!"

He made a movement as if to advance on the black, but the latter was already down and turning away at the crank. From where he sat in the car, Tex could hear the labored gasping of the Negro. Suddenly the motor coughed and sputtered. The Negro jerked the crank around once more. Texas' foot jiggled on the gas-peddle and the engine started. Sandy went around to the driver's side and stepped on the running-board. Tex slid over to the other side, making room for Sandy. He saw the Negro, his back against the vibrating car, still trying to get his breath.

"Give us that crank." The Negro shuffled up to Texas and handed in the crank. For a second, his lips moved without making sound, and then he asked jerkily.

"C-ould I go 'long wid yuh, please suh . . . jest tuh Knoxville?" Sandy threw the gear into first speed.

"Don't yuh see theah ain't no room heah fo' yuh?"

"I'll hang on outside, somehow. . . ." Sandy's left foot came up slowly to engage the clutch. His right foot pressed down on the throttle.

"No, yuh, won't hang on nowhere, Nigger!!"

The car jerked forward. Tex looked back through the yellowed and cracked isinglass. The Negro stood still on the highway, drawing on his torn mackinaw. Then Sandy grunted,

"Jest goes tuh show yuh, how lazy them niggers kin be."

BALLAD OF TAMPA

When after dinner you smoke, gentlemen, remember
Tampa leads the world making clear Havanas: Mexicans,
Cubans, Urugayans, Porto Ricans are your vassals;
Ybor City, Palmetto Beach, West Tampa sweat, ache, starve,
For the azure smoke-ring exciting tonight's new lay.
Dull-eyed sallow elderly women stand confuted
In the factory-tomb banding, wrapping, boxing.
Machines monotonously clock the minutes;
Gossamer of cellophane automatically embraces cigars.
*No, says the woman-worker, I don't count cigars packing;
There's no time, no time; we get used to it;
One look tells us how many there are;
No time . . . no time . . . no time.*

Bastard houses, colonial and Spanish, lean
Over Ybor City's narrow Seventh Avenue, memorial
Of antithetic races flowing to the New World's shores.
Here the home of Tampa's proletariat winds its lank
Streets under balconies. Labor yokes all races; voices
And awnings shout Martinez, Cohen, Carducci! But O
Beloved flaming faces of Latin America, passionate
And stern, whose eyes burn with remembrance
Of a hundred battles with the world wide foe.
Going home, gentlemen, we find no architecture;
Home is an old broken wooden box patched
With tin or paper, naked within, maybe a hard cot;
Maybe, O petit-bourgeois luxury, even two; maybe
A decrepit icebox, a table limping on three legs;
Shacks whose faces grow black with worry.
Where will the rent—two bucks a week—come from?

The workers, having forgotten under the chronic
Fake smile of the Blue Eagle the feel of labor,
Do not recall the names of conquistadors
Who first touched Tampa's shores; let the Chamber
Trumpet to a posterity of tourists the memory
Of Pamfilo de Narvaez, Hernando de Soto,

The immense teeth and spectacles of Teddy.
 We know only the third republic, the Roosevelt
 Who flashes treacherous promises through a cataleptic grin.
 We remember, gentlemen, the great strike of Thirty-One
 When we marched to the factory of Sanchez y Haya,
 And on the water tank high above Ybor City
 Nailed the red flag with hammer and sickle.
 We remember, too, the terror, the cops who wrecked
 The face of our leader Hy Gordon, cracked their pistols
 Through his wrist-bone, broke our Union.

Let us go, then Comrades, to the Communist meeting;
 Go in silence; the forgotten man is forgotten,
 The Reds remembered; they are here illegal,
 Foregathering secretly in private homes.
 Tiptoe up the stairway one by one.
 Order, compañeros; Comrade Lopez has the floor:—
 The terror grows, we have no work, we starve;
 Our wives and children hunger; those who still
 Labor aridly in the factories (robbed
 Of the traditional readers) face new wage-cuts;
 The cops ravage meetings; jail, beat, deport
 The bravest, wisest workers, those
 Who know the road to freedom from this hell.
 The factory gates are closed to Negroes:—
Let the black bastards die, let them all die,
Let the blessed Blue Eagle devour these rebellious worms,
But let it preserve our profits!

Compañeros, we shall not die; our ranks are but
 A platoon in that vast army throughout
 The world which carries high the proletarian banner
 Fighting through blood and terror toward the goal.
 We who once raised the red banner over Ybor City
 Shall do our part indeed, striking the needed blows
 For an America of work and thought for all,
 Where soil, factory and machine; art,
 Philosophy and science; love itself
 Shall be with bread the portion of the people.

JOSEPH FREEMAN

MAX EASTMAN: THE MAN UNDER THE TABLE

1. IN REFERENCE TO MYSELF

Boris Pilnyak

FROM NEW YORK I HAVE RECEIVED a clipping about myself from which I learn, for the first time, that I have been "bought" and "humiliated" by the Soviet Union. I am referring to Max Eastman's fantasies. In a lame attempt to cite witnessess for his statements about me, Eastman writes: "The facts recounted from this point on were given me by two friends of Pilnyak . . . both of whom are in a position to know them, I think, better than Joseph Freeman." Let us assume that Eastman's "friends" actually exist and that they know more about me than Joseph Freeman. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that there is one person who knows more about me than anyone else, and that person is myself. Eastman is barking at me as if I were dead; as a matter of fact I am alive, in good health, and in excellent spirits.

Permit me to recall a simple truth. A man—even a man of very good breeding—who sits under the table sees things differently from the rest of the company which sits around the table. And there is another simple truth: with people under the table there is no use talking. After all, they are people, not dogs; they can't bite your leg. And still another simple truth is that citations from unnamed and unknown "friends" is called, in plain speech, *gossip*, which is not exactly the most impressive type of testimony.

In his article entitled *The Humiliation of Boris Pilnyak* Eastman cites me as saying that I have not "the leisure to enter a polemic with emigrés." That is true, particularly as in this case, with emigrés from the revolution. If it involved Eastman alone I would leave his gossip where it started—under the table. However, I am not writing for his sake, but for those readers who are interested in the Soviet Union.

Eastman begins his fairy-tale in the typical style of the American bourgeois—with money. He states that my "income is estimated at thirty thousand rubles a year" and that I am "reputed to be one of the richest men in the Union." He needs these financial calculations in order to

"prove" that I have been "bought" to express pro-Soviet views. But not content with this "point," he proceeds to invent out of whole cloth a conversation which never took place between myself and I. M. Gronskey, editor of *Izvestia*:

The "very wealthy Pilnyak," according to Eastman, asked Gronskey about a visa to go abroad. "Of course! Of course!"—said Gronskey (in Eastman's imagination). "But I wonder what you will use for money abroad. We cannot afford the valuta, of course. Surely you wouldn't suggest that we spend on your personal needs money needed for the Five Year Plan which you yourself have been so enthusiastically extolling."

This "conversation," invented by Eastman, contains internal evidence of its fabrication. Anyone who knows anything about the USSR knows that Soviet citizens travelling abroad do not receive money from the Soviet government unless they are sent on a government mission. But what is even more striking about this invented "conversation" is that it contradicts Eastman's case. The "exceedingly rich Pilnyak" had no money with which to go abroad! How then did the rich but penniless Pilnyak manage to go to the United States. Eastman "explains":

"Only that divine American providence which watches over artists who 'violate their talents' can explain the arrival in Moscow at this critical moment of Ray Long in search of a Russian genius to exploit. The cash for Pilnyak's holiday was provided like manna from heaven—a story paid for, an advance made against the Volga novel." The "exceedingly rich Pilnyak," then, went to America for the sake of American dollars. And in America "he was feted at a great banquet of American arts and letters. . . . And in Hollywood—so great is America's eagerness to hear about the Five Year Plan—he found Irving Thalberg waiting for him with a salary of \$500 a week for ten weeks." In short, an American paradise! Five hundred dollars a week; that's twenty-six thousand dollars a year, not a mere thirty thousand Soviet rubles which have no purchasing power outside the USSR, but real American dollars useful all over the world, from New York to Prinkipo. The "corrupt Pilnyak," then, is "bought" not only at home but abroad; and in the United States his sales-price is higher. In America, Pilnyak was in paradise—banquets, automobiles, five hundred dollars a week. Nevertheless, according to Eastman, who for a change tells the truth, Pilnyak returned from this paradise to the USSR "where he wrote an indictment of American capitalism under the title: *OK*." Once more Eastman contradicts himself, for it turns out that neither the American dollar nor the Soviet ruble have any effect on my views.

My trip to the United States was not my first visit abroad. During the years of the revolution I crossed the Soviet frontier some twenty times. I crossed it before the publication of *Mahogany* and many times after it. I have had many opportunities to do what certain traitors to the revolution have done. What was simpler for me than to remain abroad with these automobiles, banquets and Max Eastman? I did not do so for an obvious reason, stated in lines which Eastman himself cites from me and which he describes as "fearless and straightspoken." These lines which I wrote in 1923 are: "I acknowledge that the Communist power in Russia is determined not by the will of Communists, but by the historic destinies of Russia; and in so far as I want to follow (according to my ability and as my conscience and mind dictate to me) these Russian historic destinies, I am with the Communists." This statement, whose "candor can hardly be questioned," according to Eastman, was written eleven years ago; it holds good today. Some people who believed this truth eleven years ago, are now under the table; for me it is even more true today than it was eleven years ago. When I wrote those words, I was a fellow-traveller; today I am a Communist writer, even though I do not belong to the Communist Party. I am proud of these eleven years of growth, years in which I learned to understand that the destiny of the USSR is the destiny of all peoples, the destiny of the Socialist Union of the entire earth.

As I look back on those eleven years, I read with amazement in Eastman's fairy-tale that during this period I have been compelled every month, every week, almost every hour to "recant," to "repudiate," to "pray," to "profess loyalty," to "beg on my knees." When did all this happen? Where? In whose feverish brain? Does Eastman regard as "repudiation" my recent books because they are more Communist than my earlier books? That is possible. At one time Eastman called himself a Communist; today he is an anti-Communist. At one time I was a fellow-traveller; today I am a Communist. It is possible that Eastman considers it a "humiliation" for me to believe in that which he has betrayed. As far as I am concerned, I have never been disloyal to the "historic destinies"; I have nothing to repent.

Eastman pays hypocritical lip-service to the "facts in the case." But let us consider a few real facts, not imaginary conversations between Gronsky and myself or the gossip of alleged but unnamed "friends" of mine. Among Eastman's "facts" is a citation from a letter I wrote in 1929, a letter of "recantation" when, according to Eastman, I was accused of being a "class enemy" who had "definitely broken with the social revolution." Eastman cites that part of my letter which says that "the tale of

Mahogany was finished January 15, 1929. On February 14 I began a novel . . . in which *Mahogany* is worked over into chapters." The novel referred to is *The Volga Flows into the Caspian Sea*. The first draft of this novel was completed on May 29, 1929, prior to the events arising out of the publication of *Mahogany*. About these events Eastman writes: "Pilnyak in extreme misery, came to Gronskey, the editor of *Izvestia*, begging him to intercede with the powers, and declaring that if some one did not call off the mad dogs of Auerbach, he would commit suicide." And then, according to Eastman, the inevitable Gronskey told me "to re-write *Mahogany* in the form of propaganda for socialist construction and the Five Year Plan." How Eastman, who has not been in the Soviet Union for eleven years, can know my most intimate feelings, including an alleged desire to commit suicide, is a question which I cannot answer. But about well-known objective facts I can speak. In my opinion, *Mahogany* has not the great historical significance which Eastman ascribes to it. It was RAPP which created a rumpus around it and in my opinion it was not very clever of them. According to Eastman, RAPP was the "monster-child of Stalinism" and served Stalin as a weapon in the realm of literature. But since we are speaking of facts, let us recall one fact perfectly well known to Eastman. RAPP was disbanded by the Central Committee of the Communist Party, probably not without the participation of Stalin.

Revolutions are not made with white gloves. The revolution of the proletariat in no way resembles a Thursday afternoon literary tea. Revolutions are victorious only when the class that makes them is disciplined. In the trenches, under the enemy's fire, it is tiresome and futile to chatter. He who accepts the revolution *fully*, naturally accepts its discipline. But he who accepts the revolution conditionally accepts discipline only on condition that it does not interfere with his own conditions. A man who insists on standing on his head will see everything upside-down. If such people insist that they see things rightside up, they are either scoundrels or fools and deserve either contempt or pity. Some times such people are big enough to realize that they have been standing on their heads, and stand up like men on their feet. As I write this, the morning's paper carries a letter by Christian Rakovsky—so often "murdered by Stalin" in the pages for which Eastman writes—in which he says: "It is the revolutionary duty of every Communist-Bolshevik to cease completely and unreservedly the ideological and organizational struggle against the leadership and the general line adopted by the Party at its last congress and to submit to its decisions and discipline."

This—and this alone—is the reason why I now repeat the words I wrote during the *Mahogany* “pogrom” which Eastman cites: “I wish to and will work only for Soviet literature, for that is the attitude of every honest writer and man.” I am not alone in this attitude; that is how all Soviet writers feel today because they realise what Eastman is so anxious to conceal: that the Soviet Union is showing humanity the road to a socialist world.

2. BUNK BY A BOHEMIAN

Leon Dennen

IN THE MAY issue of the *Modern Monthly*, in an article entitled *Bunk about Bohemia*, Max Eastman has written a passionate protest against the “falsification of history.” In *Artists in Uniform** the same Eastman has treated us to one of the most brazen falsifications of Soviet history and Soviet literature.

That this little volume is a distortion of facts is unwittingly admitted by the author himself. “I have debated in my mind,” he writes in his introduction, “whether this book should be delayed in view of the reactionary world-tendency of the moment.” Why, if this book tells the truth, should the author have had any doubts as to the expediency of publishing it at this or any moment? Why conceal the truth?

I have no doubt that irresponsible though Eastman may be, somewhere in the depths of his soul his conscience bothers him. But Eastman is not a “girl-baby.” Besides, there are a million ways of appeasing one’s conscience. I don’t know how he appeased it in those red-baiting war days when at “The Second Masses Trial” he disowned and discredited the anti-war articles of his colleague on the Masses, John Reed. Here, however, he sought the advice of people whom he considered “politically wise.” It was these “politically-wise-heads” who have unanimously decided that, at the present moment when the capitalist world is hastily preparing to dig its greedy claws into the throat of the Russian working class, a bit of slander against the Soviet Union will help matters along.

Eastman’s motive for slandering the accomplishments of the Soviet

* *Artists in Uniform*, by Max Eastman. Alfred A. Knopf. \$2.50

writers is quite obvious. He hates Communism. He hates the Communist movement and all that it stands for. He is also violently opposed to Marxism.

More important, however, I believe, in his extreme ignorance of Russia, the Revolution and Russian literature, past and present.

Stripped bare of its flowery verbiage, the thesis of *Artists in Uniform* is something as follows: The now defunct RAPP—Russian Association of Proletarian Writers—has crushed all that was “tender and creative in Soviet literature.” The reason why the RAPP was able to accomplish such a dastardly crime was because behind it stood the “sinister” and “all-powerful” figure of Stalin.

This, in short, is the thesis. To prove it Eastman quotes speeches that were never made, cites written “circulars” that were never written and depicts scenes that never took place. (See Pilnyak’s letter.)

Take, for instance, the case of Sergei Yessenin. Yessenin, as it is well known, was a talented poet. He was also, however, a neurotic and a drunkard. The truth is that Yessenin was both poet and drunkard long before the Revolution. When, after a turbulent career, he committed suicide, he left behind him poetic gems and the name of a hooligan. Why the poet committed suicide, no one knows. The secret of his death probably died with him. But Eastman is all-knowing. He knows who is responsible for Yessenin’s death. It is the RAPP, i.e., Stalin. It never occurred to this uniformless artist that the RAPP did not become popular—all-powerful, according to Eastman—until 1928, whereas Yessenin committed suicide in 1925.

Here is another instance. “The two principal events in Russian prose fiction of the last six years,” writes Eastman, “are the silence of Isaac Babel and the humiliation of Boris Pilnyak. Babel is probably the greater artist of the two.” True enough. Babel is a great artist. His sketches of Budionny’s “Red Cavalry” will live long after Eastman is dead and forgotten. But Babel is a meticulous artist. He has been writing since 1915, yet his creative output is very meager. Even Polonski, the man whom Eastman glorifies as one of the “martyrs” of Soviet literature, commented in his day upon the fact that Babel does not like “to rush into print.” Besides, to use Eastman’s own words, it is difficult to determine the cause of a negative phenomenon. But then, such an explanation does not fit in with Mr. Eastman’s thesis. Nor does it satisfy his thirst for slander. Indeed, he knows who is responsible for Babel’s “silence.” It is the RAPP. They made him uncomfortable. “They eliminattd his name from the press, for one thing, almost as completely as though he had died

or openly opposed them. . . .” Even in the Literary Encyclopedia, says Eastman, Babel’s “sin of being an individualist is consciously set forth.”

I have before me the Literary Encyclopedia. It was published in 1929, about the time that the RAPP’s “literary inquisition,” according to Eastman, was at its height. Here is in part what the Encyclopedia has to say about Babel: “In Babel our young Soviet literature has acquired a great artist . . . who has lent his talent to the service of the Revolution. . . .” As to Babel’s name being “eliminated from the press,” the five editions of his short stories which have been published by the Gosizdat—State Publishing House—in 1923, 1926, 1928, 1930 and 1932, tell the tale.

I have mentioned here but two of Eastman’s falsifications of the truth. The whole book reeks with thtm. One would have to write a volume twice the size of “Artists in Uniform” to refute each lie in detail.

Now about Eastman’s ignorance: Any one acquainted with Soviet literature will know that long before the RAPP came into existence, various literary groups and groupings—Symbolists, Futurists, The Smithy group, Mayakovsky’s Lef, Selvinsky’s Constructivists, etc.—have at different times dominated the Soviet literary scene. Each one of these groups was an organic outgrowth of the creative forces set in motion by the Revolution. Each one of these groups interpreted the Revolution in its own way and they all claimed the hegemony over Soviet literature. They quarrelled among themselves, published manifestos and held protest meetings. As one of the poets expressed it: “There is a Revolution in Russia—all Russia is a huge meeting”

The Communist Party, abiding by its decision adopted in 1925, did not participate in any of these squabbles. It did not favor any group in particular. Thus it was that the Futurist Lef—largely due to Mayakovsky’s great talent and powerful personality—became the most influential group among Soviet writers. The Na Postu group which eventually became the nucleus of the RAPP and the strongest group within it, was at that time relatively small and insignificant. But history was on the side of the Napostovtsi. They were young, energetic and zealous Communists. They soon captured the imagination of the younger generation of Soviet writers. They organized the RAPP and became the guardians of Marxism on the literary front. It was this group that raised the much disputed and much abused slogan of dialectical materialism in art and literature.

There is a tendency on the part of some revolutionary writers to sneer at this slogan of dialectical materialism. This is even true of some of the so-called Marxist critics who ought to know better. No doubt that

as a specifically literary slogan, as long as it is not translated into the language of art and literature, Dialectical Materialism is merely a high sounding phrase. It is not concrete. To be a master of dialectics does not yet imply the ability to create a work of art. As a revolutionary philosophy, however, it helped the Soviet writers to orientate themselves in the complex labyrinth of Soviet reality. It formed their revolutionary *Weltanschauung*. This, I believe, was one of the RAPP's most important contribution to revolutionary literature.

In 1932, largely due to Gorki's influence, the RAPP was dissolved. Events move swiftly in the Soviet Union, and the RAPP, too, has outlived its usefulness.

I happened to be present in Moscow at the first meeting of the organization committee of Soviet writers shortly after the RAPP was dissolved. It was one of the most inspiring meetings I have ever attended. The hall was packed with the best representatives of Soviet literature. V. Gronschi, then editor of the *Izvestia*, opened the meeting.

"This is the first Plenum of an organization," he said, "which represents all Soviet writers. The creation of such an organization was made possible by the fact that the great majority of the old intelligentsia, brought up under the influence of bourgeois culture, turned towards the Soviet Government, towards the socialist revolution. . . . The old intelligentsia became convinced of the validity of the Bolshevik viewpoint by such facts as the acute economic crisis in the capitalist country . . . and the widespread movement of cultural construction in the U.S.S.R. . . ."

He then criticised the RAPP for not having understood this important change. "The fundamental mistake of the RAPP was that they were unable to notice in time, and draw the proper conclusions from, the changing state of Soviet literature. Thus, from an organization that helped to develop Soviet literature, RAPP became an organization that only impeded its progress . . ."

Here one would think that Eastman would have at least the honesty to admit that while in most of the countries of the world, creative expression is being stifled, in Russia it was given a new lease on life. Not at all. Up to page 170 he sheds crocodile tears over the fate of the real Russian artists. But on page 171, speaking of the dissolution of the RAPP, he exclaims: "Trotsky is banished. . . . But Andrey Biely and Alexei Tolstoy [two real artists whose fate he bemoaned up to page 170], proscribed two years before as not even 'fellow travellers'—are part of a 'great united front of Soviet writers'."

But this isn't the only place where the author contradicts himself.

In the chapter on "Romanov's Recantation," for instance, we read: "Readers will no doubt imagine that I am presenting a one-sided view of the matter in discussion, that the writers I select for comment are not typical. They will tell me about the colorful stories and plays of Vsevolod Ivanov, about the vivid work done by Lidin, Fadeev, the sea-yarns of Novikov-Priboy, about Leonov, Olesha, Alexei Tolstoy, about the delicate poems of Boris Pasternak. Perhaps they will venture to mention Panteleimon Romanov. . . ." And off goes Eastman into a description of an imaginary recantation of Romanov. . . . But we are from Missouri. Yes, we say, what about Pasternak, Leonov, Olesha, Fadeev, Lidin, etc. Haven't they blossomed out during the dark days of the RAPP inquisition? Isn't it true that Gorki, one of the most influential Soviet writers, was not a member of the RAPP, that he disagreed with the RAPP and that it was he, not the "sinister" Stalin, who was finally instrumental in the dissolution of that organization? Isn't it true that Lunacharsky, another prominent figure on the Soviet literary scene, was not a member of the "all-powerful" RAPP, did not kow-tow to it and at the height of the "literary inquisition" wrote in the magazine "Iskusstvo": "Art is a social phenomenon. When the State attempts to regulate it it assumes an unpleasant, official character and it begins to degenerate. . . ." Isn't it true? But it is easier to get water out of a stone than the truth out of Eastman. Just when you think you have caught him, he manages to slip away. Sure, he admits, "I am aware that a number of excellent books have been written in Russia during the past decade." Having, however, made this admission, he immediately regrets it. These books, you see, excellent though they are, "have been written by men whose natural genius is for a narrow practical loyalty. There is, after all, a sincere literature of bigotry."

But Eastman's worst crime is his butchery of Mayakovski's genius and personality. If ever there was a man who expressed the spirit of the Russian Revolution, it was Vladimir Mayakovski. He was the poet and inspirer of the youth of the Red Army and of the workers in the factories. In order to discredit Mayakovski and establish a case against revolutionary literature, Eastman cleverly manipulates with quotations from Lenin. Lenin said some good and some bad things about Mayakovski, but Eastman quotes only the negative things. He mentions the fact that Lenin considered Mayakovski's 150,000,000 "affected and tricky." But he doesn't mention the fact that when Lenin heard with what glee the youth recited Mayakovski's poems, he remarked: "If the youth likes Mayakovski, then it is Mayakovski." Since Eastman has copied so much from the Literary Encyclopedia perverting, of course, and twisting everything

in his own way, why hasn't he copied the passage about Mayakovski where Lenin said: "Yesterday I read in the *Izvestia* a poem by Mayakovski on a political subject. I am not an admirer of Mayakovski's poetic genius although I admit that I know very little in this field. But it has been a long time since I have enjoyed so much poetry from a political angle. . . ."

Eastman didn't quote these lines because when Lenin is opposed to Mayakovski he is a gentleman, a social engineer in Eastman's own image, but when he praises Mayakovski he is only, you see, a confused "meta-physician," "a dogmatic believer in dialectical materialism."

Alas for Mayakovski! For "if poets may be compared to flowering plants, Mayakovski was a great standing coarse-stemmed swamp-watered weed." But Eastman! He is that "delicate putting forth of tendrils with a view to timid bloom which poetry sometimes is, and is usually assumed to be."

IMAGE

Mask-face of old grief, death-mask, massive
Visage uttering Joy; Joy sputtering; glorious oracle!
Joy, red on tongue with wind on frozen forehead;
Mouth open, Joy just-spoken, grief just-broken;
Clarion throat eloquent, quenching cries, eyes
Wide, soul of Hallelujah, Ah,
Fury of song, and drum and gong, fury
For the color of flags snapping on broomsticks,
Screw it in cromium on motor-cars,
Put the medallion on money,
Let it shake huge and quiet in star-water.

GENEVIEVE TAGGARD

THE ECLIPSE

Ben Field

FOR WHITES ONLY

A GAS STATION, a general store, and a row of yellow cabins. A white couple drive in early evening. They jerk down window shades and drive off midnight leaving their skins shed on the cabin steps.

On the other side of the road cotton. A Negro cropper and his wife plodding down the fencerow behind a mule with floppy ears and hipbones you could catch a hoop on. A Negro lad raking peach. A truck with cedar logs bumps on the road, full of sweated lusty dark hands. White women and their stringy men squat in the store, gossiping and gesturing against the flies. On the piazza the loafing planter with the local paper published by his friend who has risen from printer's devil to devil's printer, sucking his teeth over the essay on Magnolias and Cabins in the Moonlight. A scabby pig snorts in his yard. The earth basks in the last sun like a cob.

Then blotting out magnolias and moonlit cabins, the sign on the outhouse, "FOR WHITES ONLY." The filthy little outhouse for pin-assed creatures. Blotting out everything. Like the knotted rope dug around the neck, the chains eaten into the limbs, the shotgun punched into the heart, the horsewhip screaming above 10,000,000 Negro heads, "FOR WHITES ONLY!"

THE SHIP CANAL

ON THE HILL overlooking the canal the Negro longshoreman smokes his cigarette. Kaplan sits on a stone and gazes at the clustered masts and the smokeless funnels.

A couple of miles off on the other side of the canal is the park where the Negro soldiers were shot down right after the war for mutinying against Jim Crow.

The longshoreman says, "I wasn't in that company. I was on the farm then, already discharged."

Kaplan nods. "They've got Jim Crow in your local of the I.L.A. I'll bet. When it comes to strike, they use you as strikebreakers if the can, and they scratch up race feeling against the Negroes."

A flicker in the longshoreman's eyes. He says over his shoulder "Damn right."

For a half hour Kaplan and I had been talking to him on the hill. As we had climbed up from the street, he had frozen to the fence. And now under Kaplan's friendly patient questioning he begins losing his suspicions. Kaplan, member of the St. Louis John Reed Club, student working his way through college as assembler and tester in an electrical plant. Rode the freight home to Houston to learn from the jobless on the road. Spending his month of vacation by reading 16, 18 hours a day having found but a year ago dialectical materialism, the opposing pole of all life and thought between which the fires of the earth are shaken watered, and replenished.

The longshoreman turns halfway to us. Across the street in a café a bunch of whites loafing. Years of hounding have given the Negro worker skill in playing 'possum. His eyes move, but to one a rod away he looks as if he were talking weather or horse-racing. He talks of the cut in wages, how the men get a shot at work 2 or 3 days a month, how United Fruit pays 48 cents an hour, Luckenbach 58 cents, cut down from 70 and 80 cents. How truckers got to carry 1600 pounds and no longer 500, and you look as if you fell into the canal. Even when there's no work, the longshoremen come down to the canal. Where else can they come? Maybe they'll pick up a bit of something like a gull. Even the religion has Jim Crow. There's the picture of Christ with a white child in his arms and a black child kneeling at Christ's feet. Why should the black child kneel? If Christ be a father, why not a father's arms to all?

"It's taken us time. We're having it knocked into our heads. It's like the story about the fellow with the pups. Day after day they was blind. He'd get up in the morning and look at them and cuss. Then one day he takes one of them and knocks its head against the wall. The eyes sure snapped open then. That's it. You got to knock the head against the wall before some of us opens them."

Kaplan gets up and dusts the seat of his pants. He looks across the street. The longshoreman, turning away, says casually, "Come down again. I'll get some of the boys over." He leans against the fence and stares down at the cold stacks and sails.

ECLIPSE

EVERYBODY IS FULL OF THE ECLIPSE. The sun will be covered about 3 o'clock. Scientists will make new studies of the corona, sunspots, check up on the big Jew and his theory.

During eclipse day here in the Carolina part of the Black Belt along the streets of all the towns, Negro boys and men in white jackets trying to flag us for chicken dinner at hotels, restaurants, roadhouses. Hundreds of ads with pictures of old Negro waiters with cottonheads, young Negroes with lips like raw steaks. "See the eclipse on a full belly."

At 3 o'clock bells begin chiming in the little churches along the way. It darkens. Chickens go to roost. Sure enough, up in heaven God's servant aproning himself. Looks like a dinner plate broken, then a lid under which a great fire is straining out upon the world.

From roofs, trees, galleries, street corners and gutters, the whole blooming South seems to have turned scientist. Old films, spectacles, smoked glasses, colored bottles, everything is used to help the nose turn up to study the sun. Some act as if they'd never seen that hot coal before. Half in shade, three-quarters, and now it's all slipping, slipping with debutantes in smart clothes like show poultry under it being photographed watching. Earth's shadow gets in sun's way. No, it's the moon's. Hold up an apple and orange. This is the sun. This—but. Shrieks and squeals. And now the whole world is sunk under a huge Negro thumb.

Slowly the shadow is skinned off the sun. Again the old light in the world. Everybody returns to his old self. Chicken and waffle dinner, the banker bellies his polished desk, the boss naps in the office, the planter trims his nails, the debutantes go back to pecking their little days away. Along the blistered roads the shacks of the Negro still rot in the sun.

SADLY THEY PERISH

(A Dirge for the Objectivist Poets.)

now in the perfumed dusk,
a pause
the phosphorescent worms emerge
like vacant, jangling trolley cars . . .
a purblind peace,
the gentry of the bourgeoisie
squirm into purple space.

5 years: the ivory towers crack,
the walls are eaten with decay.
the eliot, the ezra pounds
play jazztunes of profound regrets
in hideouts of expatriates . . .
"this is coming to you by remote control."
the sacred muse, an anxious cockroach, darts
here and there along the floor. . . .

“oh death, where is thy sting?”
a rain of shrapnel in the streets:
clubs, teargas, speeches, bayonets,
the castor oil, the rubber hose,
the raids, the lynchings, pogroms, wars . . .
but butterflies have gauzy wings;
blue buzzards roost on empire-state.

confused, confused,
 the images awry
 like sappy roosevelt grins in coney-island twisted mirrors;
 some little fanfare for the weird esthetic guy
 then shrugs and sneers,
 applause that gutters to a hiss . . .
 prince hamlet scrapes a violin,
 wears rubber heels:
 absorb the shocks that tire you out . . .

fascism yawns,
 black pit of death.
objectivists stuff cotton into ears,
disdain the clear emphatic voices of revolt
yet seem to hear, though dimly to be sure,
the ancient rocking-chairs of ease
creak absent-minded praise . . .
and pansy poets bow, and sway,
launch battleships and yachts of plutes
with girlish giggles and champagne salutes;
or else (thank-god) remember yesterdays,
fingering the junk of medals on their breasts . . .

sadly they perish, each by each,
whispering madness, they disappear . . .
into the isolate doom of dreams,
into the cold gray vaults of dust.
and who will gather the darlings up,
arrange them in anthologies?
what mussolini-horse will drop
bouquets upon their mouldering graves?

5 years: the ivory towers crack!
cockroaches scuttle after crumbs . . .
the harried line of workers holds;
repulsed, returns to the attack!
in trenches, behind the barricades,
electric eyes pierce walls of fog . . .
in arid wastes of no-man's land
white grubs squirm into purple space.

HERMAN SPECTOR

BUM'S RUSH IN MANHATTAN

Edward Newhouse

WHEN MY RENT was three days overdue the woman came into the room and said, "Mister, I waited . . . "

"Don't wait any longer. I have no money."

I began to get my bundle together. She stood in the doorway. She said, "If you don't mind my saying so, I'm sure I saw that young lady before, the lady last week. I've been wanting to place her."

"She's a great wearer and smoker of nationally advertised products," I said, "Chesterfield cigarettes."

"That's her, that's the lady. Once I see a face, I don't forget it. If you don't mind my saying so, couldn't she help you? A woman ought to see her man tide over."

"It's a nice day," I said.

"Seasonal weather," the woman said, "I hate to see a young man like you down on his luck. She ought to help you instead of buying them expensive clothes."

"How's business?" I said.

"No good. But I wouldn't be saying nothing to you about rent. This is one of my best rooms. From here you can see the clock on the Metropolitan Life Insurance Building."

I had the bundle ready. "That's true," I said, "I hadn't noticed. It's four o'clock and that makes thirty-two hours I haven't eaten."

She stood aside to let me pass. "I ain't got a thing in the house," she said.

I walked down Fifth. At first hunger came in waves, then it settled into the marrows. I had supposed hunger would hit the stomach hardest but it affected me in the head. Little flames licked the inside of my skull and sometimes my head was like a toy balloon, so light, really lighter than air, straining my neck upward. The urge to walk persisted until I came to Washington Square where I drank much water.

I sat on a bench and it seemed my eyes had distended and were staring widely and unnaturally at objects in a strange perspective. Vague phrases

from books came cascading into my brain, Dank tarn of Auber, I am falling through centuries of swampy night into the dank tarn of Auber, misty mid region my stomach.

Get a grip on yourself. Get somebody to talk to. Get a grip, a grippe, Agrippina was Nero's mamma, she made him emperor so he upped and killed her. There was an old lady of Hyde, from eating green apples she died. Within the lamented they quickly fermented and made cider inside her inside. Agrippina, the soldadera. At least Germanicus was good to her, he wouldn't have let her hang around otherwise.

Now I know what was the matter with those Mexicans in Torreon, no wonder they stared so. That was supposed to be their appealing naiveté and divine indifference but it wasn't. They were hungry and they sat in the square too with their blankets and their bleak, disconcerting gaze. The style of the moment in movie actresses demanded this same intent, inscrutable gaping but they looked from under long, artificial lashes affixed into dropping eyelids and surrounded by bony, androgynous features, very attractive and awesome. The lady who started all that was shortsighted. An artist for whom Eileen posed had painted her so we knew, but some dope had explained El Greco on the grounds of defective vision too and accused Cezanne of astigmatism.

Peculiar thing, I did not feel faint, on the contrary, my grip on the arm of the chair was powerful and normal but there was this whirling space in my head which dulled or at least altered my sensitivity and made objects and passersby appear in grotesque lights and shadows. The pigeon-hole, honeycomb buildings of New York University engulfed and vomited students on the Square and the ringing of the gongs marked these convulsions. The men who lined the benches followed passing students with their eyes and in their eyes there was no lustre of envy or hate. The solitary students walked fast. The couples and the groups laughed as they went by and some sat to have their shoes shined by the little boot-blacks.

A red faced, yellow toothed, red haired man shuffled to the bench with the slow, hesitant steps of the unemployed and asked for tobacco, I emptied my pouch into his palm and he licked the dry dust out of the creases and from between his fingers.

He said, "A body can bum himself tobacco before they'll give him a nickel. Just hit town?" He eyed my bundle.

"Yes," I said, "Where's the nearest breadline?"

He said the Bowery was my best bet to get food cheap if I had a little money, then he told me how to go to the Municipal Lodging House

Annex near South Street. "I'd go down myself if I could bum a nickel. Don't let no cop catch you asking for a ride. There's regulations out."

I did not want to do any more walking either so I got on back of a Broadway Street car. The six o'clock jam was on and the trolley stopped too often. I had not ridden the back fender of a taxi for about seven years and the bundle hampered me. I would have nabbed a taxi anyway but the trolley's clattering dissipated the strange feeling in my head somehow. All the little tricks came back, when to drop off, when to step on, how to disregard the cops' perfunctory "Hey you."

A cop did bounce me near City Hall. I knew they had a free employees' bus operating between the foot of Brooklyn Bridge and the Hearst Publications Building on South Street. I looked carefully to see if Tommy wasn't visiting one of his rye and scotch buddies but I remembered his hours. In the bus I tried to tell who were copy boys, sports writers, leg men. I was sure only of a fat but dry rewrite man.

The breadline coiled snugly around the former warehouse. The doors had not yet been opened and the men stood four abreast. I fell in. Nobody so much as looked at me. A pulpy and inexorable lava of hunger flowed in my marrows.

"What do they give you here?" I said to the man beside me.

"Coffee and sandwiches."

"How long do you have to wait?"

"No telling," he said without turning around. But some others looked at me because I had broken the silence.

"You eat when them four sons of bitches get good and through with their poker," a young one said.

It was another five minutes before somebody spoke, the young one again. "I see where the mayor of Los Angeles is sending out a call for a thousand men with shovels."

There was an immediate effect.

"Yes, sir, he wants them to shovel snow next time they get snow falling in Los Angeles."

Nobody laughed. Some snorted or cackled. "Where's the funeral?" the youth said.

A fleet of garbage barges was being towed by on the East River and there were gales of retching smell. I reproached myself for being oversensitized but a few others noticed it.

"A sniff of your horse doiver," the youth commented. That was the last thing said until the doors were opened.

The line moved up briskly, hugging the warehouse. The official

at the door looked carefully into the faces, "Turn your heads this way," he repeated. A few of the men he stopped for a second look.

The youth leaned back to me and whispered, "They had a baby riot here last Monday. The bread was all mouldy and a couple of mugs started tossing it around the room." I made up my mind to sit next to this young man but I lost him inside.

We got two sandwiches and a tin cupful of coffee. The men who came after me on line had to eat standing. The smell of the coffee was dominant but you had also an interplay of disinfectant and flophouse odors. The official at the doorway stood on a chair and made the announcement that we were to clean away the benches we sat on and set up the metal springs and mattresses stored on all sides. Only a very few of the men looked at him while he was speaking.

I had two wholewheat bread sandwiches of white American cheese on which fingermarks showed. I scraped the marks off and ate but I could not drink the coffee. A man took it eagerly and offered a slice of rye in exchange. I went up front for a drink of water. You had to ask for it.

"Where's your tin?" the official said.

I returned to the table for it but some of the men had got up and there was no extra tin. Nobody would give up his. I went back to the official and told him.

"Let's look in your package," he said.

"You don't think I gypped it?"

He examined the bundle. "Hold on to your tin next time," he said, "Just for that you don't get water."

I bent down and drank some anyway. He called me a lousy bum and I called him a lousy stoolpigeon. I would have set up a bed or two but I left without doing it. On the wharves the sun was still up and I joined a group to watch the unloading of a banana cargo.

It was a white boat from the tropics. Men shuttled over the gangplank. Two bloated carcasses of rats clinging together undulated in the tide. Loosely fastened garbage came apart on the surface and boxes and condoms awaited final decomposition. Many green bananas floated on the stagnant harbor water.

A ragged man and a boy were bending over the edge of the dock dangling fruit baskets attached to ropes. They dragged them along the slimy waves, lifted them to let the water run out, then they lowered them back. The boy struggled with the water-filled basket. The man cast and drew with few wasted motions.

I said, "What are you fishing for?"

"Bananas."

"What are you going to do with them?"

"What do you think?"

"I don't know."

"Hell, we want to eat," the boy said.

They weren't getting anywhere. The boy gave up trying. A cluster drifted into the man's basket. He manipulated the rope with care. Driftwood and a rotted gunny sack tangled up the works but he set his foot against the dock and drew. Four or five of the group ate from the cluster. They removed the skins without cleaning them. The boy ate without taking the banana from his mouth, I chose one that looked water-tight. I thought it could not have been contaminated in that short a time. It wasn't bad. When the cluster was gone two other men took up the dragging. One of them said I could safely return to flop at the warehouse because after the meal a new shift came on.

It took so little to keep Eileen contented and I could not offer it. There were women who accepted everything you had and smiled graciously. They waited to see if you had more and you felt that, and kept on your toes in conversation and in the display of your qualities. In the minor tourneys if you preserved your detachment sufficiently to indicate a degree of strength you preserved also her interest and the gracious smile. When you were finished exploring each other you had brusque moments and showed to disadvantage or you fell in love and dulled her interest.

Two seamen stopped before me where I sat and wanted to know if I was applying for one of those workaway jobs. I said No, I didn't see anyone begging me to take one. They pointed above my head to a sign which I hadn't observed and it was an employment agency for marine workers. One of them said this agency was hiring only workaways and he didn't like to see any young fellows roped in, working your way was just like strikebreaking, just as bad, you're likely to get into jams with some of these crews, those boys are good and sick of scissorbills.

He was pretty sure I came to apply for one of those jobs. The other tried to soothe him, Why don't you find out where the hell you stand first, that's no way to talk, Mac.

I told them I'd be tickled silly to ship as ordinary but I didn't have papers, I hadn't known what the hell a workaway was anyhow but don't worry about strikebreaking, I was kicked out of high school trying to start a strike, not break one. I said, Just give me another week, I'll lose the college boy look.

He said, Sure Mac, this guy's all right, you owe him a drink.

I said the hell, but they took me around the corner and bought me a rye and a package of tobacco when they found my pouch was empty. They gave me the address of their union and I promised to be sure and sign up if I got a berth.

They left me in the barroom to take up their post and warn prospective workaways. The tobacco came in handy because the pipe restored tranquillity and took away the aftertaste of the poor rye. There was a fly-spotted but ample free lunch counter and I stuffed myself with liver-wurst on soda crackers. I returned to the flophouse just in time to make the quota. They turned hundred away. The tough official wasn't there and the orders were handed out by people who appeared to be trusties.

We undressed while water was being warmed in a primitive boiler. Everybody but the trusties had to take a shower. A uniformed individual asked whether any of us had contagious diseases but he did not wait for an answer. Most of the men seemed to have gone through the mill before and he was completely disregarded. They undressed slowly and reluctantly. They spoke in undertones and belched and left sullen farts. The aggressive youth of the afternoon breadline was taunting someone whose red flannel unionsuit shone in the gloom. This Irishman scratched at his sores with carressing, gnarled fingers and the youth poured abuse until a trusty shoved him across a pile of clothing on to my bench.

"How long do you wear your socks, Irish?" he shouted back.

The trusty said, "That's enough out of you for the night," and that made the boy lower his voice.

"He wears them until they're so stiff he just stands them at the foot of the bed and steps into them like you would in a boot."

"That's an old gag," I said.

The men eyed each other's bodies furtively and their mutterings wove into the hissing flame of gas under the boiler. They clung close to the unpainted brick walls, black with smoke and chipped by heavy impacts. The floor was below the next room's level and coated by a residue of soap from previous group showers. The Irishman picked his way carefully between the benches and applied the seams of his red underwear to the burning gas. He was delighted at the crackling of the lice. He showed the heavy cloth around the benches and the grease spots evoked grudging grunts of admiration. The youth continued to revile him. He said, "Put your hair into that fire and them cooks will have enough grease for tomorrow's soup."

"You're below my attention," the Irishman said, "but twenty years ago I would've pissed down your crooked nose."

"I'll spill your guts," the youth said without malice.

"Twenty years I would've pissed town your crooked nose."

"Twenty years ago you pissed in your bed."

A dark, sad laborer was scraping mud off his rubber boots. He had a stubble of a few weeks' growth and he blew hairs of moustache from the corner of his mouth. Large chunks of clay fell off the boots and he picked at them with bare toes. At the sound of running water he peeled off a few vests and sweaters. He was hairy all over with graying black patches. His eyes were dull brown. He cut a finger and carmine ran over his thumb. He tore a piece of lining from one of the vests and tried to stanch the flow. The blood soaked through and he watched the spot growing larger.

No one touched the wall between me and the laborer but a small piece of brick crumbled to the floor.

"That's decay," I said.

"Got makings?" said the man at my left.

I took out a pouch and placed it in his lap. When he saw how full it was he quickly threw his cap on it.

"They'll bum it off you in three shakes of a lamb's tail. I got paper."

He had a little, black New Testament of India paper, already half used, and he rolled a butt with one of the sheets. Then he passed it to me and I read the title page. The other print was too small to read in the gloom. I lit my pipe.

"I had a pipe like that in Chattanooga. I was knocking down a pretty penny in that town," the man at my left said. His Adam's apple was manoeuvring actively and I thought he would reminisce.

"What line of work?" I asked.

"Hosiery line. Used to be a maintenance engineer in a factory and the boss man fired me. Never did find out why. Did that ever happen to you?"

"I don't get fired. I quit. All except this last job I had. The guy called me into the office and said it was me or another fellow with a wife and two kids. Maybe it was two wives and one kid."

"I wasn't fired myself, come to think of it," the man said. He laughed with a gurgling sound and spat shreds of tobacco. "Ha, I got canned." He nodded solemnly to the trusty who was walking among the benches telling us the showers were ready.

I undressed. This gaunt man with the prominent Adam's apple looked at my underwear intently and stretched the knit shirt with the professional touch peddlers employ when they say, "Nice piece of goods."

More half naked and naked men crowded through from other rooms. The flophouse stench of filthy bodies, filthy clothing and breaths, of disordered stomachs closed in and there was no shaking it.

Most of the men had coughs of one sort or another. There wasn't a moment when two or three weren't clearing their throats. Putrefaction was in the air even of the shower room. The water ran lukewarm. I did not use any of the communal soaps and I refused the dirty, long towels. When I was dry I put my shoes on and stood in line for the main hall where the beds were assigned. The official looked me over and pointed in the general direction of an empty cot.

I had one army blanket to sleep on and one for cover. I wrapped my shirt around the pillow and lay flat on my back.

A voice asserted dogs have the same type of lice you find in your own clothes and the man to the right of me snorted in derision. He said there's at least three different kinds on people alone and then there's about forty other species on all kinds of animals, including seals and elephants. He said a man in the eighteenth century had written a long poem concerning a louse that was found on a plate of peas served to George III. All the kitchen help had their heads shaved.

The hell with this place, I said aloud. I drew my shirt from around the pillow and stuffed it into the bundle. The beds creaked and writhed and sleepy, whipped eyes followed me down the hall.

"What's the matter with you?" one of the officials in the anteroom said, "It's three o'clock."

"I don't like your accommodations."

"What'd you think this was going to be, the Waldorf-Astoria? Show your bundle."

He tore the cord and the worn wrappings. All three officials watched me as I struggled to tie it up again.

"He wanted southern exposure," one said.

"There's a man inside vomiting. Why don't you see what's wrong?"

"He's got a pain in the belly for a change, instead of being one," the first official said.

"You're a bunch of grafting c——ers," I said.

All three rose. One of them started for me but another held him back and said, "Beat it, bum."

A FRESCO FOR A. MAC LEISH

They are all dead: our reaching hands half a century long
Cannot restore them: a heap of bones there: a buffalo's whitened skull:
A buried tomahawk boys dig in a lost cave in the mountains:
A rusted wagon wheel with no spokes rotting in the sand in the sun:
These remain: these they left us:

What shall we restore

Restoring them? Those stuffers of animal skins:
The museum men with field glasses: the bone-lovers:
The scientific ghouls: they stiffen the corpses:
They fix the representative stance: the correct pose: the historic gesture:

These antiques inspire memories not sad: not without glory:
They pushed back mountains: they took plains in their stride:
Their homesteads peopled a continent: their sons are with us:

Not the museum: the sunburnt face is produced with
A little lacquer: it is a fine art: children are impressed:
Also hollywood directors:

Abide with me awhile: there are always pioneers:
They are saddling new horses: buckling the cinches: waving goodbye:
Who's going along? they're saying out there there's new lands yonder:
Paths to be broken: and those higher mountains: new divides: new
frontiers:
They resemble the old: but they're different: and they speak all languages.

ALFRED HAYES

OUT OF THIS HOUSE

But I will not go back to that house ever.

I heard it first in the talk that goes in families,
Half-articulate, a lament recalling
What good the fathers had and lost. I heard
They were among the eight percent who lived
Bending the Negro backs to cotton and canefield,
And their house stood soundly for a time
Built in the wash of sweat from the black thighs.

When I came in the book to the place where living
Was a choice of Southern slavery
Or Northern sweatshop, I thought that house ended.
But I could feel it because it was in the blood
With the Negroes singing, and at that time I said
That if you threw out madmen like John Brown
The South had better men, and better men
Than you could find today living anywhere.

My fathers all were dead inside that house.
Their sons were wandering North from desolation.
These also were my fathers. There was nothing
A man could do unless he worked for money,
But they did not know either how to keep
Or how to spend it. I began to think
The house was stood on the eternal shoulders
Of one who crept beneath it, cherishing,
Inside, its ruined and strangled remnants. I saw
That South or North it was the same damned house.

Now that I am leaving these poor rooms
The house will call me fool, or the house will say
(Knowing deceit will not change my intention)
That only traitor rats abandon vessels
Caught in the whimpering terror of the end
And it will hate the ones that creep from under.

PARTISAN REVIEW

Therefore the house will say that all of us
Will die like rats. I say that's partly true!
Some still imaginary barricade
Stinks in tomorrow's sun. The rats will eat
And fatten on the dead and bite us dying.

Sometimes I am afraid to think of dying
Because I do not see where the glory is,
And death is death. But we will not be rats
That bloody year, and we will not be remnants.
In God's name, if you like, what is a man
That always has to have his brother stamping
Smack on his face and eating all the fat
Off his ribs, and what, if you like still,
In God's name is his brother, when there's nothing
He can turn his hand to in his own
Windshaken house? Counting it up myself,
I have been sick in this house for seven years,
And this is my house, where the ruined sun
Glints the beams with death, and Empire lost
Shrieks its ghastly stammer in the blood:
This is my house where the Hungry queue
With terrible thin faces.

They will not
Stand there much longer looking at this house
With mute, impassive jaws. I do not think
The house will keep them there much longer looking!

If I but turn my mind to think of it,
Those waiting there, I think, will wreck the house,
The hard throats crying the blood of generations.
No more than I will they be bound: myself,
I shall not feel the hands stretched out to hold me
And I will not look back at that lost house.

LOYD COLLINS.

THE KAMARINSKAYA COMES TO THE SHOP

Arthur Pense

THE SMALL CROWDED SHOP was noisy in the dusk and heat. The odor of escaping gas grappled with the chicken market smell which sifted in from the next building. Sewing machines sang like gigantic crickets. A presser bombarded the stretched coat-shoulder. The Hoff-man machine hissed.

With a tongue-shaped corduroy apron protecting his pressed pants, the sulking boss worked at a table, rapidly marking coats for buttonholes.

The shop was suddenly jarred by a bellowing baritone greeting which rose above the clamour.

"A good morning to you, my good friends!"

When the operators turned their heads, they discovered a spectacled giant in a high caracul cap and a caracul shawl collar on his overcoat. He held a violin case under his arm.

"A violin has come to the shop!" a whisper passed at the machines.

The tall musician removed his cap and shook out a layer of snow from the groove at the top. He revealed a thick mat of white hair which ended in a half ring of heavy curls, resting on the black caracul collar.

He wiped his face and pointed beard, adjusted his eyeglasses, and was soon bending over his violin.

At once the machines began to roar louder, moving faster as if they were pricked by spurs.

The boss looked up. There was perfect order. The operators, in unison with the violin, hummed the Ukrainian song: "Viut Vitré."

*The winds are blowing,
The storms are raging,
The trees are be-ending lo-o-o-ow-ow.
Oh, how painful,
My heart, how painful,
But no tears will flo-o-ow-ow . . .*

"Oi, little children!" said Tessie, the old finisher, to the circle of girls around her. "It's such a sad song! Oi, such hands, such golden fingers! Bessele, may vigor reach into your little bones! Hand me my pocket-book. I'll give him a whole nickle! Listen, listen! Imagine such a musician to be without work, to have to wander through the factories and climb the filthy staircases. Oi, what times we lived to see!" She sighed.

The second variant was expiring in slow resignation. It was intercepted by brisk, plaintive notes:

*My neighbor has a white-washed house,
My neighbor has a loving spouse,
But I have no little house,
Neither happiness nor spouse . . .*

The song faded out. The operators demanded "A gay little piece!" "A dance, a dance!"

"Play a dance for them!" the boss said with a sneer. "Play a dance, and see my great mechanics waltzing in their seats."

"The Rhumba!" called the turner, who loved jazz. "The Rhumba!" he repeated. With one stroke he rammed a pair of sleeves into the open armholes of an overcoat. "The Rhumba!"

"The Dupa!" countered the blackbearded presser and let his Hoffman machine hiss. "Play the Internationale. I demand the Internationale!"

"He demands!" chuckled the boss. "Look at him, mister. This is my great presser, Arke-Levy, who carries the Communist Manifesto under his small prayer shawl, and presses Bolshevism into the jackets!"

There was a roar of laughter.

Arke-Levy was quick with his answer.

"I dropped my prayer shawl all right, but your jackets remain the same burlap as ever!" He curved his lips in disgust. "Call this 'coats'? Call this 'seams'? It's pasted together with spit. The whole thing needs to be Bolshevised. The belt loops falling off; one pocket made of flannel, the other of calico. The Negroes are paying hard cash for these rags. The miners' kids dress in this trash!"

"Hey, Mr. Fiddler!" the presser exclaimed. "Up with your bow! Smite the strings and tack the corners!" He stepped on the paddle and clamped down the upper head of the Hoffman machine. With his right hand he directed the musician:

Arise, ye prisoners of starvation!

The violin began and the workers caught up fragments of the Internationale. Arke-Levy stumbled on the lines. He could not regain his footing beyond *tradition's chains*, repeating the phrase which he carried into the next song.

The musician finished with a triumphant shake of his head. "And now something gay! The Kamarinskaya!" he announced.

The boss was mumbling to himself. His anger was gathering. "Make it short, mister, stop bothering my operators!"

At the Kamarinskaya the operators heaved in their seats. Under the pretext of going to the toilet, Sammy, the joiner, cut a few lusty capers through the scattered coat heaps with:

He-e-e-ey, hey, hey, hey, hey!

Ech, tararam, tararam, tararam-tam!

The turner beat the table with his tapering stick:

Pupu, rupu-dupa-dup!

The girls clapped their hands. The operators used their lips with terrific force for tambourines:

Tprutza, tprutza, tprutza-tza!

Tprutza, tprutza, tprutza-tza!

The shoulder presser with his drooping moustache whacked with his old-fashioned iron, always missing the notches in the dance. Arke-Levy's machine lagged far behind. He inlaid the Kamarinskaya with *No more tradition's chains!*

He-e-e-ey, hey, hey, hey, hey!

Tprutza, tprutza, tprutza-tza!

Hyech, tararam, tararam, tara

"Stop your 'tararam'!" the boss cut the revelry as if with an axe. "And you, old beggar, get out of here, and do it fast!"

"But I didn't collect the pennies!"

"Yes, let him! Let him collect!" the operators demanded. "Let him collect! Give the man a break!"

The old musician was pressing forward. The boss stopped him at the door and began to wrest the violin out of his hands. The old man shuddered, there was terror in his eyes. "Oh, my violin!" he cried in despair. "The pogromschick will break my violin!"

All the eight operators stood up. Like lightning Arke-Levy jumped up from the rear and clamped his arm around the boss' neck. The violin was released.

With tearful eyes the musician grabbed his instrument and his caracul cap and stumbled out of the shop

NOTES ON A CHARACTER

Barney Conal

WHEN I CAME upon Tommy again he had just married. She read books a little, they said she "came from a good family," and evidently Tommy was not what she had been looking for. Tommy didn't think she was an angel. He wasn't that kind. But he thought she had "class."

I knew Tommy as a kid. He was one of your square-shooting tough guys, sporty and hardboiled around the gang and quiet away from it, in school and at home. Even the teachers liked him, though he wasn't a good student. They could always rely on his sense of loyalty.

When they married, Tommy had a steady job as a bookkeeper and she was working too. She was a stenographer. They went in for furnishing an apartment, but no babies. She, coming from the "good family," set out to make a home of the apartment, she was wanting to create the family aura immediately. She had evidently become wise to something in Tommy that we as kids had naturally missed. She was out to surround him with the mystery of herself, perhaps because he was so damn matter-of-fact and unemotional a person for a woman to handle. Tommy could be kind, even gentle, but he was self-righteous in a way and stubborn. This righteous stubbornness of his probably used to be the force behind his old through-thick-or-thin loyalties; it had a moral, almost a spiritual, quality to it. It was what had bullied us secretly when we were kids.

If Tommy didn't like a thing, he didn't like it. If he got to like a thing once, he was bent on liking it forever—on principle. He had never liked the taste of butter, he had never liked raisins, anything in the shape of custards or jellies, anything he had not tasted or heard of before; and he didn't now. He read a certain newspaper and certain story magazines and he read no others, no matter how superior she said other reading was and even though he respected her statement that she had taste. He didn't have that taste.

What she didn't quite understand was how much Tommy belonged to the American sport's-world culture, along with legions of the lower middle classes. It is more than a mere interest in sports, it is a way of

life, with its own heroes and ideals and literature and sense of right and wrong and good and bad. Tommy still wanted to play basketball in the schoolyard, he loved handball passionately, more than football, and big-league baseball was important. She had found out he didn't care much about meeting new people. All he wanted now was to live with her, in a nice apartment, be married now, that is, while he went on working at his job, meeting the fellows sometimes, going to a show, reading the *Daily Sun* daily and an exciting story now and again.

Their problem at first was not one of making ends meet. They were both working. She injected a problem by trying to keep him alive to her superiority, her "class." But Tommy had a way of his own—and when he got used to being with her he applied it to her, too—of not accepting anything in or about a person that wasn't explicit, that he hadn't recognised before. When she hinted that she wanted to stop working for a while, Tommy balked: he didn't see why. He was working and she had been working when they had met and until now. Tommy couldn't see at all that the fact she was married now and still working subtracted something from her "class" for her. But then Tommy couldn't see that she considered this thing "class" a progressive thing; that you always kept moving up into it, becoming better "class."

She vaguely won her game in the end by allowing herself to become pregnant. He got frightened at the thing, at the whole new aura it threw about their lives, and finally even let her persuade him it had happened through his own fault. Of course, she quit work. The meals were better, she had time to do odd little things that pleased him. But it was then that she learned, ruefully albeit, for she hadn't intended to have a baby, really, that he would accept anything if it was there in front of him, if it had the authority of seeming actuality. That was quite a blow to her. She could have pretended to be pregnant. But more than that—perhaps she did want a baby, she wasn't very certain that she didn't—she was hurt. She only believed in the desirable things she couldn't reach. He, it turned out, believed only in what was, no matter what. It wasn't that he attributed any particular sanctity to the factual. He simply had respect for the "facts," whereas she despised them. What is, is—his whole attitude said that. But he could be shrewd, even cynical about certain facts. He was a big-city boy, a city street-boy, a wise guy in a way. As he put it to me, "I don't swallow *everything*—but facts are facts."

I found out from him, he didn't mind telling these things, that he was earning only twenty-five a week. "Business is gettin bad," he said, as though he were giving me a weather report. She was at home all the

time now, and she was making ends meet. She really liked the discipline of counting pennies, budgeting, and having a baby to worry over. Her people, it turned out, had always been poor. But because she had company that evening she was putting on the dog. She bought little fancy things for supper, served them up daintily in her best dishes, and wanted to talk about books.

"Do you expect your job to last," I asked. "Sure." "Sure?" "Well, there's no use not, is there?" He had a way of lifting his arm and making a gesture of gently keeping things down, of patting them smooth, with his open palm. It is like the motion a handball player makes in tapping a ball gently close against the wall that his opponent has hit from far out with all his might. He was still reading the *Daily Sun*, the *Saturday Evening Post*, and he was still, despite the baby and the twenty-five a week income, going out with the boys one or two nights a week and on late Sunday mornings, for a game of handball or basketball. About the only change I noticed was in his attitude towards her. His earlier worship and later respect had been welded into one and transferred to the baby. He objected openly that night to her putting on the dog. He didn't believe in that, he said to me, referring to her "classy" set up of the table for my benefit. But she did. She did these doggy things with a certain earnestness, and stubbornly, even when you suspected she knew you didn't like it done.

With a logic he would have respected had he been better informed, his wages sank to eighteen a week. Within two months he lost his job. But she went out and got one. It almost seemed that whenever she really wanted to she could get herself a job. She was an excellent stenographer. But he couldn't take care of the baby and they couldn't afford a nursery on her eighteen a week. She left the child with his mother, but the child was unhappy. He didn't like the arrangement and since they still had a little money (they had begun saving as soon as the cuts in his salary began) he wanted her to quit work. But that was madness to her. Of course it was madness, but so is unemployment, and to Tommy, the die-hard practical one, the baby seemed far more real and important. But she lost her job.

They moved into his mother's house, furniture and all, cluttering up the place. She was ashamed and tight-lipped about it and he was uncomfortable. He was one of the unemployed now, and he made a systematic thing of it, almost respectful of the fact. He made the rounds of unemployment agencies, at first every day, then three times a week. He signed up with the public relief-work agencies. If he made a remark now about conditions it would never be more than: "Sure, things are pretty

tough. Somebody's got to do something." But that was quite an admission from Tommy: it was as though all the capitalist-trained and ignorant, honest masses had spoken.

His wife, however, kept treating their own condition as though it were a wound. She kept dressing it. From time to time she actually got a temporary job, how, I don't know. She would slip out of the house with a sly look, like a person who was about to pawn something precious, and finally, after much coming and going, report that she had landed a week's or two weeks' work. Tommy would watch her and wonder, just watch her going through with it, and wonder. But he certainly was not feeling ashamed or inferior because of her success: as, in a way, she wanted him to. Then one began to realize that he didn't like it, that he despised her for it, that somehow, to him, her dolling up and getting a job was a sell out on her "class," a peddling of it.

I met him downtown several times during this period. "Say, what is Communism?" he asked me one day. I tried to get the simple concrete images for a statement. But as soon as I began to explain he grinned, listened as he always did, decently, but with an "I am from Missouri" smirk, and said thanks. He never asked me again. But finally I asked him. "I looked at some of their stuff," he said, "but it don't get me. It don't get a guy a job. It may be all right, I guess, but it's too deep." By "deep" he always meant either spurious or superfluous.

Then he got work himself. He got "called" by one of the relief-work agencies. When he was quizzed and then investigated at home, he got sore. "Think of it," he said, "in front of the baby!" But he took it. For six weeks he addressed envelopes in a college building and then for three weeks more sorted books in a library a few hours a day and the rest of the day twiddled his thumbs. He was disgusted with it, but it was standing in line on pay day that infuriated him. "I don't mind what they call work," he explained, "I guess there is no work. But that hand-out line gets me." He despised the money he got. At least he always gave it all to her—a thing he never did with money he thought he had earned—and took some from her only for the desperate necessities—the newspaper (still the *Daily Sun*), cigarettes, carfare.

When he was paid off and told that when there was work for him again he would be notified, he was relieved. He hated pretending that he was a guy earning his living. But I don't think he ever asked the social question, ever inquired of anyone or anything of the large alleviating (certainly not the revolutionary) ways. It is possibly very difficult for people who have been living and working outside of organized labor, even

outside of its atmosphere, to see, not alone experience, themselves as workers reaching out to workers for help. The hands they were taught to clasp were those of prospective employers, when they condescended to it, by proxy. Yet, watching Tommy, I learned a few significant things. He walked the streets and became intrigued with the bafflement of this other aura of unemployment, just as he had once been baffled and intrigued by the "class" of his wife. And that although the immediate fact was still *the* fact for him.

He told me one day, as though were telling me he had played a game of handball, that he had put back some evicted people's furniture. "Alone?" I asked, trying to look blank. "No, with some other guys." "Wasn't that against the law?" I asked. "Sure, but what's the law." I realized then that of course Tommy and his kind never had believed in The Law, they believed in laws that worked. We walked along saying nothing, which usually is the thing to do with Tommy, he doesn't like talk. "You know," he said, "I enjoyed myself. Some of these guys got class to them." "Who," I said. "do you realize that you were probably helping a bunch of Communists?" "Sure, they told me they were. They weren't ashamed to tell me." "Well," I said, blinking, "would you do it again?" He thought for a long time. "If it came up," he said.

It was as though Tommy had found himself a temporary job. The fact that he hadn't been paid only made it seem clean, these days. But it was only the particular group that had asked him for a hand as he was passing by, that had "class" for him. He didn't think all Communists had class or that Communism was worthwhile because some had it. Tommy wasn't interested in minds, ideas or ideals. Realms like these were "deep" and deserved only a gentle grin. He went on reading the *Daily Sun* and the *Saturday Evening Post*, saying that a lot of it, in the magazine, was the bunk, but he liked it anyway, he like a good story. As to the newspapers, it never occurred to him to question their news: News was news. But he thought maybe the *Daily Sun* was leaving out a lot.

She had a cousin in the city who was "left" and articulate. Tommy called him "one of the Red-haired boys." Her cousin would come up once in a while and, eventually, talk economics to Tommy. Tommy would listen and grin. A "talker" was a marvel to him, though suspect. Radicalism was prophecy to her, and hence anathema. Her cousin gave Tommy a "left" magazine without telling him what it was and saying it wasn't "deep" at all. Tommy read it through, handed it back, and said: "They talk too much. It don't get them anywhere talking like that." Asked how, Tommy objected to the language, specifically to the language of a certain story and more specifically to a phrase "police pup" in that

story. From the story's "tone" Tommy thought the reference was to a cop. He respected cops. They had been facts of his all his life. When the cousin pointed out that the reference was actually to a young police dog, Tommy was mollified, but said that anyway they needn't talk so much, or that way.

Yet now that Tommy had found the streets of his kid-gang days again, and people with the "real stuq" in them, he clung to them as if at last he had found something on his own grounds that had "class" to it. He kept drifting among the organized unemployed groups, among strikers, lending a hand here and there, to no matter what group, if they let him, and so long as he thought they were trying to solve for someone, by action, the helplessness he felt in himself. Tommy still wanted to go along with the facts. And "the facts" were still those solid immediacies of his, now related to his own sense of ebbing security. All that had happened in this time was that without thinking of it he had switched his allegiance from his wife's "class," which was somehow betraying him, to what he found in these baffling, battling groups who would not sell out, who were doing something and not talking.

When I saw him again and asked him how he was, he said: "O.K." "Starving?" "Yeah—a little." "Doing anything about it?" "Well" he said doggedly, "I'm not a chump looking for a job by my lonesome anymore. Bet on that." No. Tommy belonged, practically, to an Unemployed Council!

That is, he was not a member of one, but he was going there regularly, putting back evicted people's furniture, relieving on picket lines whenever he was asked to. He still would not march in a general demonstration or anything like that: he didn't believe in it, he said. Tommy still couldn't get that word "solidarity": too deep. But he would join any mass unit whose goal was explicit in action. It was strange to watch him those days. No, he had made no new friends, he said (actually, some of the active ones were old friends of his) and, no, he was not associating with the "reds." All he would concede to me was that you needed a crowd, as he used to know when he was a kid.

The next time I saw Tommy he was in jail. "Say," he said, "can't you get me out of here? I didn't want this." "What did you do?" "Nothing. I was helping some strikers in front of a factory and I poked a cop." "You?" "Why not!" "A police pup?" I asked. Tommy grinned and fell silent. Then, suddenly, he was sore. "The damn fool cops, they knew what we were doing. We were getting those guys a raise in wages. Some cops are damn fools."

BOOKS

A FACTORY LIVES

THE LAND OF PLENTY, by Robert Cantwell. Farrar and Rinehart, \$2.50.

One of the particularly shopworn criticisms hurled against proletarian novels is that the characters do not "live", that they are not true to "life." Hal Driggs, answering such a criticism by the editor of *The Frontier and Midland*, replied: "It is hard for the dead to recognize the living." And so it is. This form of snobbishness among critics has a long tradition behind it. Shakespeare never wrote about a heroic proletarian; his workers are all fools or rogues. Our modern critics are a bit more liberal, however. Poolroom bums and budding gangsters, planning "gang shaggings" and yearning after the anatomical projections and crevices of "bitches" and "pigs," may pass muster as legitimate guinea pigs for the scalpel of an "artist." But let a writer venture into the affirmative side of the class struggle, portray a heroic Communist or worker, try to catch the atmosphere of a strike or a factory, or the revolt of the oppressed, and anguished howls immediately arise, briny tears flow over the violated canons of "art."

Critics who have been cloistered in the library or have learned about the proletariat in poolrooms and beer joints may decide that the characters in *The Land of Plenty* lack "life." That is because Robert Cantwell has pictured a life these gentlemen do not know. Hand the book to any man who has ever worked in a factory, as I have, and ask him what he thinks of it. I know Robert Cantwell's factory. I can smell it and see it, and every character in *The Land of Plenty* will be recognized as an old friend by anyone who has learned about workers by being one, who has felt the itch that sweat and sawdust bring, who has hated a high-balling foreman or thrown a brick at a scab.

The Land of Plenty is the story of a West Coast factory which manufactures doors, window frames, etc. The night shift is working on an export order, the factory is as hot as the hubs of hell inside. Carl Belcher, formerly the efficiency expert and now the night foreman, is pounding the workers on the tail. All of them hate him fervently. The power fails, the lights go out, and everything is thrown into a state of chaos, men groping about blindly, Carl hunting for Hagen, the electrician, to bawl him out. Hagen is an old-timer, and resents Carl's riding him. In the darkness repressed hates fester, and in the course of the night the reader is acquainted, one by one, with the most convincing gallery of

factory workers found in any recent novel. There are Johnny Hagen, who has had to quit school to help support a host of relatives, driven back to the old nest by the depression; Walt Connor, who intended to work only during vacation from college, but had to stay, and who becomes a fink; Winters, the half-breed sawyer-foreman; Ellen, the Polack girl and her sister, weak and sick from an abortion; and many others. A whole factory and its workers emerge solidly in the first section of *The Land of Plenty* dealing with the events of one night. By shifting from one character to another, Cantwell has blurred and impeded the flow of his narrative, but the final result is that each character sticks in the mind like a cocklebur and stays there through the swiftly moving second section.

Carl, the neurotic foreman, fires Winters and Hagen, but the men force MacMahon, the superintendent, to reinstate them. This gives the workers "the first sure knowledge of their strength." When they find during the next day that they have been double-crossed and that Winters and Hagen are to be fired anyhow, the men spontaneously vote a strike. The strike is fairly peaceful till the strikers, lashed by a violent rain-storm, gain entrance to the factory. Then trouble begins, the strikers barricaded in one part of the factory, the scabs and cops in another. The strikers decide to stick it out, since the fat's in the fire. They hope to bring the factory owner to terms. In the morning, fighting begins on a grand scale. Johnny and Vin Garl escape to a secluded spot on the beach near the factory. Another striker, "his hair . . . matted with blood from a cut on his scalp, his eyes almost closed from the welts on his swollen cheeks," makes his way down the beach, to bring Johnny the news that his father has been shot.

"The rain fell hard, drenching them while they waited, not like rain but like some new and terrible weapon of their enemies. Johnny tried to crowd under the driftwood and Vin Garl put his hand on his shoulder, 'Come on, son,' he said gently, 'don't cry,' and then they sat there listening to him, their faces dark with misery and anger, listening and waiting for the darkness to come like a friend and set them free."

Here the book ends, its development having justified the title of the second section: "The Education of a Worker."

Cantwell has not romanticized his characters, neither has he brutalized them as some of our "clinical" authors might have done.

The language is full and robust, but never painfully "tough." The workers in *The Land of Plenty* don't have their chests festooned with crepe hair; they don't talk from the corners of their mouths; they are credible workers.

Without stylistic hijinks, without sacrificing any of the vigor of his material on one the hand, nor fan-dancing for the patrons of circulating libraries and sniffers for erotica on the other, Cantwell has written a book that proletarian writers are going to set as a standard for a long time.

JACK CONROY.

DOS PASSOS: SYMPATHETIC SPECTATOR

IN ALL COUNTRIES, by John Dos Passos. Harcourt, Brace & Company.
\$2.50.

THREE PLAYS, by John Dos Passos. Harcourt, Brace & Company. \$2.50.

These two books demonstrate over again Dos Passos' remarkable talents as a writer. He knows the value of the American idiom for American writing. He knows how to make musical and dramatic use of language. And he knows how to arrange events so that an effective rhetoric of action supports the verbal rhetoric. Sometimes, as in a few of the sketches in *In All Countries*, his subjects are too slight for the weight of literary effects he puts upon them; and sometimes, as in *The Garbage Man*, he attempts a symbolism which turns out clumsily. But his writing never fails to give pleasure.

However, I am not concerned here with discussing the qualities of Dos Passos' work as literature, but as revolutionary literature. I find certain qualities of mind revealed in his writing which keep him outside the revolution and his writing outside revolutionary literature, though it has important indirect revolutionary value and will always be, technically and psychologically, of the greatest interest to all writers, revolutionists included.

In the first place, Dos Passos does not consider himself a revolutionist; and a revolutionary writer is one to whom writing is a revolutionary act. He remains an impressionable and sympathetic observer, but still, an observer only. There is perhaps, from the evidence of recent travel literature, no more sensitive and intelligent sight-seer roaming the world today; and his books offer valuable and absorbing impressions. But revolution is much more than a spectacle, and in its most important aspects is inaccessible to the mere observer.

In another sense, Dos Passos' psychological orientation is not revolutionary. He does not have a strong faith in the power of man to change himself or the world. Probably he believes so intellectually; but in the way he sees his characters, and in the way he sets them in their destinies, I feel another philosophy, the old philosophy of chance.

This is characteristic of American life and is the product of American history. It could not help but influence American writing and thinking

of the before-the-World-War generations. Europeans happened to come into an almost empty continent. This continent happened to be extraordinarily rich in resources. European capital and advanced industrial processes happened to be available together for an exploitation of these resources, unexampled in human history, for its quickness and thoroughness. Never before perhaps had sheer circumstance played so naked a part in a world-influencing historical process. The circumstance, rather than the man, seemed therefore all important. That was why American "men of destiny," as they explained in the silly symposium called *Luck*, saw their careers as dominated by chance.

It would be an offense to Dos Passos to suggest that this is his belief. But, unconsciously, he has absorbed it to the point where in his stories it is chance, rather than man, who is the creative agent.

Airways and *Fortune Heights*, the important two of the *Three Plays*, each presents the American social dilemma, and in each the villain is left unclear. The villain is an abstraction which we may call Chance, although the victimized heroes are very concrete, human and suffering people. Like many squeamish writers, Dos Passos is moved by deep pity for the victims of our system but avoiding hatred, he avoids any clear representation of the men on the other side.

Compare these two plays with a play like *Stevedore*, and the difference between the realistic revolutionary attitude and the indecisive sympathetic attitude becomes clear. In *Stevedore*, Walcott, the white boss, is very humanly portrayed. We even see him in his own terms. But we see him living out the cruel snobberies and persecutions of his class; we see him sic the police on an innocent but "uppity" Negro, as a means of crushing a strike movement. We see it, and understand it in its class relations without the least harm to an excellent piece of characterization. And at Walcott's side we see the bulls and the police captains, in solid reality. In *Fortune Heights*, however, we see no capitalist, except the ruined banker who shoots himself, who is himself represented as a victim of chance. And instead of live bulls, we have a gang of shadowy deputies led by a romantic ex-detective writer who breaks down when he sees shooting. In other words, the audience is asked to feel contemptuous pity for a strike breaker, because in an obscure way, he too is a victim of the system.

In each of the two plays a fighting worker is killed, and in each that is the end of the fight. The death is defeat not, as in *Stevedore*, merely one of the casualties of a battle with victory ahead. Because he hesitates to see distinctly the realities of the class war, because he avoids being involved in the bitterness of the struggle, there is a blur upon these Dos Passos plays which keeps them not only from being revolutionary literature, but from being literature in the more general sense.

ISIDOR SCHNEIDER.

A SOCIOLOGICAL FAIRY-TALE

TECHNICS AND CIVILIZATION, by *Lewis Mumford*, Harcourt, Brace & Co. \$4.50.

Even the most critical reader must admit that from several aspects Mr. Mumford's book is impressive. It is a very big book. It has excellent photographs. There is a very fair bibliography. The style is elegant. But on the whole it is a disappointing book. Strip Mr. Mumford of his habitual announcements that such and such is the law of things (and no questions allowed), and we get a lot of typical after-dinner conversation in intellectual suburbia—interesting but false “syntheses” (and does Mr. Mumford loves to synthesize!); a host of big names; and a leathery taste in one's mouth.

The book is a bad introduction to the field of technics. It cannot be compared to Usher's *History of Mechanical Invention*. Mr. Mumford does not introduce new concepts, as was done by Matare' in his important study of several aspects of modern technics, *Die Arbeitsmittel, Maschine, Apparat, Werkzeug*. For all his impressive compilation of inventions and discoveries, Mr. Mumford does not seem to possess an adequate knowledge of technics or modern science. His passing references to modern physics, for example, are gathered from botched-up simplifications or from idealistic interpretations. He never attempts an analysis of what a machine is, or what are the elements of a motor. When he discusses scientific method or law, he rehashes Whitehead very badly, or makes such stupid statements as that the experimental method in science was “invented” in the seveneenth century.

Mr. Mumford has little understanding of the relation of technology to social processes. He presents a patch-quilt of concepts and statements taken from people as diverse as Sombart, Veblen, Spengler, and Max Weber. He buries his reader in a barbarous terminology (technical syncretism, carboniferous capitalism, biotechnics, the “bitch-goddess,” organic ideology, social energetics, “basic communism” as distinguished from the Communism of Marx and Lenin), but the net result is a lot of what New York intellectuals call “rich writing” and nothing more.

Mr. Mumford alternately patronizes and refutes Marx, as when he notes “the defects of (his) abstract economic analysis,” or when he speaks of Marx's “description of price and value” as “unscientific,” and as being “in fact mythological constructions.” Nevertheless, it is to Marx and his followers that we owe our understanding of the role of technics in capitalistic civilization. In the first volume of *Capital* Marx made his classic analysis of the place of technics under capitalism and its relation to social processes. One can only hope that Mr. Mumford will reread the section of the first volume which deals with this subject. He will find

there an understanding and an explanation of the factors involved that provide us with one of our important clues to the development and decay of capitalism.

It was Marx who demonstrated how modern technology arose on the foundation of previous discoveries and technical knowledge. Merchant capitalism and the factory system provided the economic basis for a rapid development. The revolution in technics was accompanied by a revolution in the relations of labor to the productive processes that led to a change in all social relations. The relation of labor to the productive process conditioned the development of machinery. Present trends towards remote control and automatization of production are goals that are inherent in the development of machinery. But the complete fulfillment of the technical revolution waits upon the realization of a revolution in society when the proletariat will destroy the capitalistic relations of production. Modern technical developments are acting as an accelerator of the fundamental contradiction of capitalism—the antagonism between the forces of production and capitalist social relations that are acting as a fetter upon further development.

This is perhaps a simple lesson, but it is one that Mr. Mumford either does not know, or completely overlooks. Instead of analyzing the development of capitalism through its stages as mercantile capital, industrial capital, and its last stage, finance capital, he uses an approach the practical result of which is to blur over the fundamental fact of contemporary society—the class struggle.

Because Mr. Mumford shies away from the class struggle, he can have such naive notions as that the NRA abolished child labor in the cotton mills; that Japan invaded Manchuria because of population pressure; or that the infamous Baltimore and Ohio company union scheme of speed-up is a move “toward a more positive integration of labor.”

For Mr. Mumford the class-struggle is a hangover from the “paleo-technic” age. That is why its misguided exponents push it with so much “ruthless vigor.” From the heights of his neo-technic culture, Mr. Mumford discovers that the proletariat is disappearing, and with this disappearance must go the facts and values “upon which Marx founded his policies and programs.” How Mr. Mumford deduces this amazing theory from the faster rate of growth during the twenties of the number of workers in service industries compared to the rate of growth in the production industries, Mr. Mumford never makes quite clear. He can ignore the fact that in 1930 some 70 per cent of the gainfully employed were members of the working class, because fundamentally he is not interested in the realities that confront mankind today.

He likes to play around with verbal puzzles and logical exercises. This is the only rational explanation one can make of his analysis of war as an “institutional drama.” War veterans will be interested to learn that when they engaged in combat, war brought “a release from the sordid motives of profit-making and self-seeking that govern the prevailing forms of business enterprise.” This is not a surprising statement, since it

comes from a man who lists the class struggle below imperialist war and gang warfare. To him "war, like a neurosis, is the destructive solution of an unbearable tension and conflict between organic impulses and the code and circumstances that keep one from satisfying them." Until we rise to the level of Mr. Mumford's private brand of organic culture "war will probably remain the constant shadow of the machine: the wars of national armies, the wars of gangs, the wars of classes."

Twelve years ago Mr. Mumford wrote a book on Utopias. As a man devoted to science and rational thinking, one would think, he would have gone far beyond the dreamers he portrayed. We would expect that he would have stopped dreaming of "what we need before we can build Jerusalem in any green and pleasant land." But that is exactly what he does. He constructs a sociological fairy-tale that is as naive as it is irritating to anyone who is aware of the world we live in. He is for a system of "basic communism" which in recent times "was first seriously proposed by Edward Bellamy." His system is nothing more than an extension to "the community as a whole" of the principle of "the small fixed income." Mr. Mumford even descends to the level of argument to point out that "no capitalist talks about this system as one that demoralizes or undermines the self-respect of those who are so supported; indeed, the small incomes have been an obvious help in the arts and sciences to their recipients."

Despite his obvious ignorance of social forces, and his inadequate understanding of science and technology, Mr. Mumford does not hesitate to describe in thirty pages most of the features of his kind of middle-class paradise. Mankind will come to his heavenly city not through following "the particular nineteenth century ideology, the messianic absolutism, and the narrowly militaristic tactics to which the official communist parties usually cling, but through the extension of the present system of "communized" police and fire services, baths, lodging houses, ferry services, etc.

It must be obvious by now that Mr. Mumford's most grievous errors and his ridiculous antics are due to his failure to recognize the realities of the class struggle. This leads him dangerously close to the intellectual paranoia of Spengler whom he has attacked with so much eloquence. Both live in dream worlds: Spengler in a world of aristocratic he-men; Mumford in a world where men love flowers and pictures and are interested in garden cities. Mr. Mumford should know better. He has studied Edward Bellamy's reactionary theories but does no better than repeat with small variations, Bellamy's mistakes.

If Mr. Mumford really wants to rid the world of monopoly, waste, and social inequality, he is taking the wrong road. It is to the interests of the ruling class that middle-class intellectuals go in for exercises in wish fulfillment, rather than join with the working class in an open struggle against the capitalists. Every capitalist will forgive Mr. Mumford his feeling of intellectual superiority, if he will remain content with proposing housing schemes that will always be plausible and never possible

under capitalism. They are not afraid of Mr. Mumford's individual and private revolution. And surely he must know that he is not sneaking up on them under the disguise of a verbal barrage, putting something over that they are not aware of. He will not make them swallow the pill of revolution by coating it with preposterous doctrines or neat verbal syntheses that have no connection with the realities of capitalist society.

What they are afraid of is that intellectuals will follow the course of John Strachey or the world famous sociologist H. M. Muller—people whom Mr. Mumford, because of his interest in economics and science, should read. Will Mr. Mumford remain content to dream about the good life (much of which, no doubt, he already enjoys), and end up in an American fascist concentration camp, where his return to the organic will consist of digging ditches or shovelling manure? Or will he swallow his pride (and this is not much to swallow, after all, since he has so much to learn) and lend, first, his presence and, later, when he has learned more about the class struggle, his mind to the working class? Will he join the workers in a real fight to rid the world of capitalism, and help build a new society where everyone can enjoy the good life that is so dear to his heart?

DAVID RAMSEY.

MALRAUX AND THE REVOLUTIONARY NOVEL

LA CONDITION HUMAINE, par André Malraux. Gallimard, 1933. Paris.

M. Malraux has written two important novels. *Les Conquérants*, published in Paris in 1928, is now out of print in English. *La Condition Humaine* is about to appear under the title *Man's Fate*. The excuse for this review is to call the attention of English readers to one of the most significant radical novelists in any country. Our curiosity about his novels can for the present be only partially satisfied. They are historical documents of the Chinese revolution under a disguise which can be pierced only by one who has had as intimate a knowledge of the events as Malraux himself. They are *romans à clef*, invaluable for the vividness and detail of their picture of this troubled period in Chinese history. The earlier work gives a cross section of the conflict of national and class interests during the Honkong and Canton uprisings of 1925, particularly of the relationship between the representatives of French imperialism and the still undifferentiated revolt of the Chinese masses and bourgeois together. *La Condition Humaine* is confined to the smaller canvas of the conflict that emerged two years later between the Chinese Communists and bourgeoisie and that ended in the victory of the latter under the leadership of Chiang-Kai-Shek. In spite of the historical connection between the material of the two books, they do not form a single unit.

The earlier volume is cheerful and naive. Edmund Wilson has said that it is written in the style of Conrad. But the significance of the remark is that Malraux has been forced to romanticize a situation he has not yet been able fully to grasp. He has taken it in the large, on the side of the picturesque, precisely because he is not yet qualified to take it otherwise. But beneath is an immense curiosity which predicts the clarity and discrimination of the later work. *Les Conquerants* is a diary of Malraux's first contacts with China. It is an honest but only a preliminary document, written before its author was able to digest the philosophical and the formal implications of his material. If he sympathizes with the rising revolt, it is for two reasons: that drama and spectacle are on the side of the revolutionists, and that since their revolt is directed principally against the British imperialists in Honkong, French imperialist interests are for the time being on their side also. If Malraux pushes on into open sympathy with the Chinese Communists, it is that he has brought from France a disillusioning knowledge of the graft and duplicity of French politics and business interests, quite as much as that he is young, adventurous, and has friends who are involved already in Chinese Communism for the same reasons. The consequence is that there is a distinct confusion in the book. The Communism of his French characters, uncertain as yet of its philosophical basis, is tinctured with the soldier of fortune attitude, and in consequence has not yet supplanted a strong sense of French nationalism. Neither the reader nor M. Malraux is quite sure of the actual motives of many of his characters. It is not quite made clear that the methods of French business firms in Indo-China are the same as those of the British imperialists hated by French and Chinese alike. He is candid in presenting the fact of their machinations, their aid of the revolution, their attempts to secure a *quid pro quo*. But he does not put these dealings on the same level as the British. The book therefore represents on the philosophical side a period of transition for Malraux.

By the time he is writing *Man's Destiny*, his position has been so clarified that he is able to turn the final years of the struggle into a novel. What had to remain a mere journal before, now is under an equal compulsion to transform itself into a novel. His now clarified understanding of Communism, especially of the Chinese Communists, who have by now escaped bourgeois misconceptions, obligates an order in his material, sets up the craving to round out his own experiences, to increase their essential veracity by an escape from the circumstantial limitations of a diary into a medium capable of the form he now sees implicit in the very disorders of the revolution itself. By adopting the method of fiction, he is permitted to give, unimpeded by the mere facts of his daily observations, the representations of every native reaction to the revolutionary situation. The temperament of the anarchist, who, made reckless by consistent poverty, out of perversity seeks his own death in the death of his enemy, is superbly presented through an attempt to blow up Kai-Shek's automobile. The indifference of bourgeois leaders and their German generals to human suffering, their rugged individualism, their imperviousness to a social out-

look, is as clearly shown as in Agnes Smedley's *Chinese Destinies*, in the murder of Kyo, the philosopher's son, for associating with Communists. The devotion of the Communists, now in touch with the Comintern, disciplined, no longer the dupe of bourgeois nationalism and Confucian traditions, is of course the very heart of the book. But Malraux is too sensitive, too Marxian a novelist, to make his book even by inference a tract for Communism. He places old China dialectically in contrast to the new in the careful account of the relationship between Gisors and his son Kyo. Gisors, the representative of old liberal China, teacher and philosopher, is openminded about Communism through love of his son. But his own formed point of view dominates him. The stench of human injustice and human suffering about him he generalizes into a universal rule, and has recourse to opium as a wilful controlled escape from the insoluble eternal problem. The problem for the intelligent man is to dull the edge of reality without denying its nature. And yet, when, after his son's murder, Kyo's widow decides to go to Moscow to study, Gisors, through the magnetism of his son's personality still existing for him, becomes conscious of the new possibility. He will not deny what this new generation so firmly believes. Man's destiny may be rather in the new interpretation of reality united with the new discipline, beyond the reach and need for opium.

EDWIN BERRY BURGUM

NO FOCUS

THE LAST PIONEERS, by *Melvin P. Levy*, *Alfred H. King*, New York, York, \$2.50.

SECOND SIGHT, by *Clifton Cuthbert*, *William Godwin*, New York, \$2.00.

Neither of these novels can be considered in the category of revolutionary literature. Both of them have, as have numerous bourgeois novels that are not intentionally fascist in scheme, revolutionary potentialities which the authors, either through lack of understanding, experience, or possibly courage, have not developed.

In this respect, *Second Sight* is the less developed of the two, being more limited in its potentialities by the narrow scope of the author's materials. It is the psychological study of a young intellectual trying to stabilize himself emotionally by means of a love affair with a woman who is older than himself. For a while Stanton loses himself in her, but as awareness returns so does his despair. Lovemaking is not enough, neither are the illusions he works hard to create. In presenting Stanton's struggle, Cuthbert frequently achieves a Proustian level of sensitiveness, but we think of his subtleties as the superfluous products of a nimble mind; there is nothing in the novel to give them substance. Just as Stanton

reaches such depths of introspection that he finds it difficult to pull himself up to the rim that overlooks the exterior world, so does the reader of *Second Sight*. Stanton's dilemma is not presented in terms of society; almost exclusively, it is treated in terms of Stanton's mind. As such, the novel impresses one as some act of self-indulgence.

The major faults of *The Last Pioneers*, on the other hand, lie chiefly in the author's conception of his materials, rather than in their scope. The novel is rich with color, background and personalities. We are witness to the birth and expansion of a large city, developed largely through the persevering exploitation of two men. Herman Merro was a Polish-Jew who after an adventurous youth in Europe fled to America and settled down in Puget (the author's fictitious name, probably, for Seattle). Dexter was an ex-Harvard man who had come West to become a capitalist. The two worked well together; their sole concern was making money and they did not care whether it came out of bawdy houses or out of the taxpayer's money. They married whores because there was little else around at the time. When the city was growing they thought of themselves as its founders and plundered it until depression came and destroyed them.

Here, then, is a set-up which, with proper handling, would have been a powerful and authentic novel. It fails to be either chiefly because Levy pays little or no attention to the class struggle. This is a serious omission, not only because the class struggle plays a tremendous role in the growth of most American cities, but also because by neglecting it, Levy overlooked an excellent opportunity to give his novel the element of conflict it needs so much. Dexter's unfriendly relations with his employees, an occasional strike or I. W. W. demonstration are cited here and there in the book, but "honorable mention" is all that such incidents receive. There is no attempt made at dramatizing any of the conflicts between Dexter and his workers, no attempt at explaining the attitude of the proletariat of Puget. Levy simply confines himself to a recitation of Merro's and Dexter's money-making escapades, and the antics of their chief tool, "Mick" Delea, self-styled "Defender of the Prostitute."

The total effect is similar to that achieved by the average New Yorker "Profile", which places the emphasis on points about the subject that are curious or eccentric, rather than analytic or explanatory. It is amusing for a few pages to read Levy's well-narrated anecdotes about Merro, Dexter and Delea, but after a while they become annoying. They fail to get us anywhere near the characters. The reader who is not class-conscious will read about the progress of Merro and Dexter, and think of them as heroes, men who were so clever that they were entitled to anything they could wring out of Puget. To the class-conscious reader, their story will seem too one-sided and detached, the author's series of incidents and anecdotes pointless.

JERRE MANGIONE.

JEW'S UNDER HITLER

THE OPPERMANNS, by Lion Feuchtwanger. Viking Press, 1934, New York, \$2.50.

Feuchtwanger's latest book, which is devoted for the most part to the Nazi persecutions of the Jews, lays bare the defects both of his technique and of his philosophy. He writes acceptably in a loose easy style when he can apply the method of his historical fiction to the superficial relationships among the members of a large and prosperous Jewish family. But when this method must give way to intimate detailed characterization, when the scope of the novel narrows from the sketch of family relationships to the description of the agonies to which one of the Oppermanns is subjected by the agents of Hitler, then the book becomes unreal as though pieced together out of newspaper clippings. Feuchtwanger's method will not permit him to portray the intense emotion as distinguished from the picturesque. But the reader feels that the real defect lies in the inadequacy of the novelist's experience of life and particularly in the conventionality of his conception of Judaism. He therefore makes the mistake of writing about very wealthy Jews who, having lost contact with their ancient religion, have fallen into a way of life the materialism of which is insidiously concealed beneath a superficial interest in German Romantic culture. Though they have lived in Germany for generations, they have intermarried with foreigners and maintained villas in Italy. For such persons it is pathetic, but it simply cannot be tragic, as the author would have us believe, for them to be forced to pursue their comfortable life with a somewhat lessened income in a foreign land. And when one of them, deciding to be heroic, returns to Germany, he merely reveals, despite his wealth and culture, what to gentiles has been considered the typical Jewish combination of braggadocio and pusillanimity. It was a useless gesture to return. It was cowardly, once having returned, to refuse to face the consequences. When influence has won his release from the detention camp, he decides the proper course for the Jew is to live mindful of the island within: which means, when stripped of verbosity, to conform outwardly in such a way as to preserve as much of comfort and prosperity as possible. Doubtless this has often been a course forced upon Jews to their own disgust. But to-day, when Communism affords them at once an honest and an ultimately effective attitude, it seems a pity that Feuchtwanger has not dared even to mention it. His capitalistic heroes see no other way out than the strategy of disguising their business under a Christian name and avoiding the appearance of open competition. It is the natural compromise, justifiable on psychological grounds, if a novelist is determined to have bourgeois heroes. But he should not delude himself into the sentimentality that he has discovered a tragic situation. Under modern conditions, tragedy for Jew and gentile alike is the doubtful privilege of the poor.

EDWIN BERRY BURGUM

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OLD AND NEW

DRIVING AXLE, by V. Ilyenkov. International Publishers. \$1.00.

THE WELL OF DAYS, by Ivan Bunin. Alfred A. Knopf. \$2.00.

There is a great and vital literature being developed in Soviet Russia. I should like to recommend here Ilyenkov's *Driving Axle*. It is a novel by a young writer about a new life. It is fresh, alive, and charged with revolutionary creative energy. No doubt, professional "aesthetes" will not like it. Even in the New Masses, to my amazement, I find that Beatrice Kinkaid who reviewed the book, bemoans the fact that there is "no humor anywhere" in it. Why there should be humor in a novel that deals with the very grim subject of sabotage, that is tense and dripping with blood, is another one of those inexplicable mysteries of life.

It would be interesting to compare here (merely by way of contrast) Ilyenkov's work with that of Ivan Bunin, an older and more prominent writer who has recently received the Nobel Prize for literature. Incidentally, why the sages of the Nobel Prize committee bestowed this very lucrative prize upon Bunin is no secret. Bunin, as compared with Gorki or Babel, for instance, was never considered a great Russian writer. It is true—as it so often happens in the literature of other countries—while he himself was never a great artist, he had nevertheless a strong stylistic influence upon the young Soviet fellow travellers. He had, but he has no longer. After all, it is an axiom by now that even styles in art are created from convictions based on social and economic relations. And Bunin's work represents the past, the very antithesis of present-day Soviet reality. Indeed *The Well of Days* is permeated with a nostalgia for old Russia, "holy Russia," as Alexander Blok put it, "Russia the solid fat-rumped and stolid," Russia of masters and serfs, exploited and exploiters, a Russia that is long since dead and forgotten. Thus in honoring Bunin the Nobel Prize sages have merely fulfilled their historic mission—to glorify the dead and decadent past.

Driving Axle, on the other hand, humor or no humor, in spite of its shortcomings, is a great novel about a great historical epoch and a great and heroic people.

L. D.